

BENDING HEALTHCARE • THE GATES AFFAIR

DOUBLE ISSUE

THE Nation.



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LETTER FROM
A STATE
IN CRISIS
MARC COOPER

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Letters

Band-Aid Malfunction

ANN ARBOR, MICH.

Dude! Your Band-Aid is inside out! [Cover art, July 13] How're you going to "cure...the global economic crackup" if you can't apply the world's most basic boo-boo device? Kiss it and make it all better? Not to mention that the Band-Aid is "flesh" tone. A cure for/by those of Caucasian persuasion?

JESSICA UPTON

The Public Option: Doomed to Fail

CAMBRIDGE, MASS.; WASHINGTON; CHICAGO
Regarding your editorial "Public Option Now!" [July 20/27]: a public option won't fix the mainstream Democrats' flawed healthcare reform proposals. Only a single-payer reform would make universal, first dollar coverage affordable. It would save about \$400 billion annually on bureaucracy and rein in costs over the long term through global budgeting and rational health planning.

Even a public plan option far more robust than anything on the table in Washington would forgo most of these savings, making comprehensive coverage unaffordable. While a public plan might cut into private insurers' roughly \$10 billion in yearly profits (which is why they hate it), that's only 10 percent of their overhead. They spend much more tracking eligibility, collecting premiums, marketing to healthy (profitable) patients, demarketing to avoid the sick, and shifting costs to patients and providers. A competitive public plan couldn't match the efficiency of Medicare, whose integration with Social Security allows automatic enrollment, disenrollment and premium collection.

Moreover, a hybrid plan would forgo hundreds of billions in administrative savings because hospitals and doctors would still have to maintain armies of administrators and billing clerks to joust with hundreds of insurers.

A kinder, gentler public plan would quickly fail in the healthcare marketplace.

letters@thenation.com



Insurers compete by *not* paying for care. Competition in health insurance is a race to the bottom, not the top. A public plan that did no marketing would soon be saddled with the sickest patients, whose high costs would overwhelm any administrative efficiencies and drive premiums to uncompetitive levels. Similarly, eschewing private insurers' schemes that shift costs to patients and other payers would be a crippling competitive disadvantage. To survive, a public plan would have to imitate private plans' bad behaviors.

A healthcare system dominated by private insurers cannot provide families with the affordable coverage they need. A public clone of private insurers won't help.

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2nd Sex, 2nd Wave, 2nd Thoughts

BOSTON

Katha Pollitt observes, "Nobody wants to hear, though, from middle-aged women with relaxed and generous views about sex, let alone who are still having it" ["Subject to Debate," June 15]. And ain't that the truth! I've been researching the involvement of people over 50 in alternative sexualities for my book. Editors like the writing, compliment the proposal and then tell my agent, "Yuck! Would my mother really do that stuff? No one wants to know about it."

I'm a pro-sex second waver: passion has not waned. But the demographic of editors has changed big time, especially with all the consolidation in corporate publishing leading to the replacement of senior editors with less-expensive younger ones. The "sex wars" turn up in all sorts of contexts, not just within the feminist movement. Thanks, Katha Pollitt.

SUE KATZ

(continued on page 24)

Dire States

In what should be the greatest liberal moment in decades, Barack Obama runs the risk of presiding over a socially and politically devastating triumph of conservative strategy

and policy. It won't happen at the federal level, where a reasonably progressive president and Congress have begun to renew the critical missions of agencies starved by right-wing predecessors who preached a dated and destructive "government is the enemy" mantra.

Rather, it will play out in recession-ravaged states, counties and municipalities, where basic services are being eliminated, schools are laying off teachers and what remains of the safety net is being shredded. The crisis is severe, and spreading. And only the Obama administration and Congress can prevent an economic strangulation of state and local governments that would exceed all but the wildest right-wing fantasies.

Battered by an economic downturn that has collapsed tax revenues, struggling to meet demands that rise with each new round of layoffs and foreclosures, and dramatically more restricted than the federal government when it comes to balancing budgets, states (and the county and municipal governments and school districts that rely on them for revenue-sharing) are experiencing a meltdown that threatens not just social services for vulnerable Americans—as Georgia Levenson Keohane describes on page 18—but the basic infrastructure of government. The conservative dream of so weakening civil society that public services and schools no longer function is on the verge of being realized in states across the country.

The crisis is not just in California, whose structural pathologies are outlined by Marc Cooper on page 11. Officials in four dozen states have experienced their own variations on San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom's realization regarding

California's plight: "It's the issue that transcends all other issues. You can't talk about issues in healthcare, education and infrastructure improvement until you focus on the issue of these structural imbalances in the budget."

COMMENT

Forty-eight of the nation's states have struggled this year to balance budgets in the face of staggering revenue shortfalls. By quickly and efficiently using desperately needed federal stimulus dollars, most states were able to adopt balanced budgets before their June 30 deadlines. "Without the money from Washington, things would have simply shut down in a lot of states," says Wisconsin State Representative Mark Pocan, a Democrat who co-chairs his legislature's Joint Committee on Finance and who has led regional and national networks of progressive legislators. "Even with it, we've had to cut back when the needs are more pressing than ever."

According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, at least twenty-one states have implemented cuts that will make it harder for low-income families and children to get healthcare; at least twenty-two are cutting programs for the elderly and the disabled; at least twenty-four are cutting K-12 and early childhood education; and at least thirty-two are cutting higher education. At least forty-one states and the District of Columbia are laying off or furloughing public employees.

And things are going to get worse, fast. Anticipated revenue shortfalls for the coming years are as severe and potentially worse than what the states have already had to deal with. Even before the current fiscal year is done, several dozen states are likely to see their budgets go



Page 25: A gross unfairness

Inside

2 Letters

Editorials & Comment

3 Dire States

5 Noted

6 The Story of a Fixer

6 Capitalism

Bend It Like Obama?
CHRISTOPHER HAYES

Columns

6 Deadline Poet

Late-Night Comics...
CALVIN TRILLIN

9 The Liberal Media

Class, Not 'Race'
ERIC ALTERMAN

10 Beneath the Radar

Beer and Sympathy
GARY YOUNGE

Articles

11 Greetings From California

Letter from a state in crisis.
MARC COOPER

16 Terminator Timeline

STEVE BRODNER

18 Our Tattered State Safety Net

The states are in critical need of federal aid to meet basic human needs.
GEORGIA LEVENSON KEOHANE

20 Unpopular Science

Intelligent science reporting has been gutted—just when we need it most.
CHRIS MOONEY AND SHERIL KIRSHENBAUM

Books & the Arts

25 CANADAY: The Straight State

STEVEN EPSTEIN

30 MOOREHEAD: Dancing to the Precipice:

The Life of Lucie de la Tour du Pin,
Eyewitness to an Era
RUTH SCURR

34 ANDERS: Between Fire and Sleep: Essays on Modern Polish Poetry and Prose

BENJAMIN PALOFF

35 Doppler Elegy (POEM)

BEN LERNER

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News & Analysis

Babak Sarfaraz: Iran's next Supreme Leader?

Jeremy Scahill: Blackwater seeks gag order

Dave Zirin: Michael Vick's return

Video: Juliet Eilperin on climate change politics

SlideShow: Sotomayor's rise

The Archivist: A new trove of classic *Nation* newsmaker profiles

out of balance, as revenues continue to hemorrhage. It's "like breaking your leg and then getting pneumonia," says Corina Eckl, who directs the fiscal program at the National Conference of State Legislatures.

If the revenue shortfalls weren't bad enough, states are only now beginning to come to terms with pension fund losses—California's two largest funds are out by some \$100 billion—that started with last fall's market crashes and have accelerated as thousands of public employees have been driven into early retirement.

For states that have already raised taxes, slashed spending, raided rainy-day funds, furloughed workers and released prisoners to make ends meet, these new challenges will be overwhelming. That might delight conservatives like Grover Norquist, who likes to talk about getting government "down to the size where we can drown it in the bathtub." But the social consequences are wreaking havoc not just on the poor but on the middle class, especially as school districts implement deep cuts and public-safety forces freeze hiring. The potential consequences for Obama and Congressional Democrats governing at such a chaotic moment cannot be overestimated.

As dire as the circumstances are, it is still possible to stabilize the states. But that won't happen without federal interventions. President Obama and Congress have far more flexibility than state officials, who operate under tight budget-balancing rules. And they should exercise those options quickly. Recognizing that most of the administration's long-term goals—particularly healthcare reform—will require functional regional and local partners, Washington should adopt a crash program to stabilize the state economies.

This fall's appropriations process is the place to start. No matter what happens with healthcare reform, smarter Medicaid reimbursement strategies that reward quality of care and eschew schemes to raise money for new programs by squeezing the states will help states balance budgets and maintain services. Transportation and infrastructure proposals advanced by Minnesota Representative James Oberstar and Oregon Representative Peter DeFazio, both Democrats, will give states more options and create jobs. The education budget, if it can be wrestled away from No Child Left Behind dead-enders, can be used to help states and school districts keep teachers on the job. And the Obama administration and its Congressional allies should use this budget to renew the revenue-sharing programs killed by the Reagan administration in order to starve state and local governments.

Even with smart budgeting and state-friendly policy shifts, however, it's likely that another stimulus will be necessary. But the much-discussed "second stimulus" will work only if it is firmly focused on the priorities of job creation—which helps states already experiencing double-digit unemployment generate new tax revenues while easing social-service demands—and direct aid to state, county and municipal governments.

Banks and financial institutions were never "too big to fail." State and local governments are. The president and Congress must concentrate their energies on averting government failures that would devastate states and communities—and put "change we can believe in" out of reach.

JOHN NICHOLS

Noted.

EMPIRE STATE MATH: On July 9, after five weeks of political paralysis caused by the momentary defection of Democrats **Hiram Monserrate** and **Pedro Espada** to the GOP side, the New York State Senate finally got its act together. But the crisis raises serious questions about the awkward balance of power in Albany and the frail nature of the Democratic majority (32-30) in the Senate.

According to the **Prison Policy Initiative** (PPI), which studies how prison populations affect state and local politics nationwide, New York is a grand perpetrator of prison-based gerrymandering. Despite the fact that the state Constitution explicitly declares that a person's residence doesn't change while in prison, thirteen upstate counties continue to ignore that, claiming inmates as constituents even though they can't vote in those upstate counties. Without these so-called constituents, seven districts wouldn't be drawn the way they are now. PPI argues that the disparity in population creates an extra Senate seat for upstate New Yorkers while disenfranchising downstaters.

Unfortunately, while New York may be one of the most exceptional examples of prison-based gerrymandering, it is not alone. PPI has found similar abuses in Pennsylvania, Ohio, New Hampshire, Virginia, Nevada, Wisconsin and Texas, among others.

What continues to feed this cycle of misrepresentation in New York are the repressive Rockefeller drug laws. For decades upstate conservatives, like Senator **Dale Volker**, have resisted any major reform of these laws. Democrats managed to make a dent a few months ago by passing some minor revisions that would redirect resources to rehabilitation and repeal many of the mandatory minimum sentencing practices. But the road ahead will be difficult, since shipping nonviolent criminals upstate protects so many seats. DARIUS DIXON

STUDENT SCOOP: At **Campus Progress's** July 8 national conference, 20-year-old emerging journalist **Michael Tracey** found himself in possession of a major scoop:

former President **Bill Clinton** had admitted, for the first time, to supporting same-sex marriage. Clinton made the revelation to Tracey while mingling with attendees after delivering the conference's keynote speech.

Immediately, Tracey began thinking about the best way for a student journalist to break the story. The stars aligned the next day at **The Nation/Campus Progress Youth Journalism Conference**, where Tracey approached *Nation* senior editor Richard Kim, who was facilitating a workshop on turning ideas into articles. Their meeting led Tracey to write an article for *TheNation.com*, which in turn ignited a minor media storm. ABC reporter **Jake Tapper** subsequently grilled White House press secretary **Robert Gibbs** over whether or not Clinton's change of tune had any impact on Obama's position (the current president supports civil unions, but not marriage, for same-sex couples). Later, **Jimmy Fallon** quipped on **Late Night**, "Bill Clinton revealed that he now supports same-sex marriage—even though he opposed it during his presidency. To be fair, during his presidency he also opposed his own marriage."

"I don't know if President Clinton expected that his rope-line conversation would end up in scores of publications from DC to the Netherlands," commented **David Halperin**, director of *Campus Progress*, "but our national conference is about activism, journalism and the energy and determination of young people."

Tracey says that while mainstream media might refuse "to ask the tough questions," his experience has proved that "anyone who is motivated enough to really make a difference can do it.... Citizen journalism is alive and well." His plans for the next year include launching an alternative publication at **The College of New Jersey**, where he will be a senior. ALEX DIBRANCO

OUR DAY IN COURT: Last year Congress compounded the damage of George W. Bush's secret wiretapping program by passing the **FISA Amendments Act**. The FAA gives the government even broader authority than it enjoyed under the original program. It now has legal permission to carry out massive dragnet searches of the international communications of US citizens without

individual authorization, without revealing the people to be surveilled and without probable cause—a clear violation of the Fourth Amendment's strictures against unreasonable search and seizure. Not only can the government collect such communications; it can retain them indefinitely and disseminate them within the government and to foreign governments. The FAA also immunizes the private telecommunications companies that abetted the government's domestic spying.

As soon as the FAA was signed into law, the **ACLU** and *The Nation* (on behalf of certain of its contributors, including columnist **Naomi Klein** and **Chris Hedges**) filed suit in federal district court to overturn it as unconstitutional. We were joined by **Amnesty International**, **Human Rights Watch**, the **Global Fund for Women**, **PEN American Center** and several other organizations. As part of our work, the plaintiffs regularly engage in sensitive communications with whistleblowers and other sources abroad who are under threat of imprisonment or assassination by their own governments or extremist groups. In allowing the government to spy on these communications and pass them on to others, the law dangerously compromises their confidentiality.

In July the ACLU legal team and the Justice Department presented oral arguments before **Judge John Koeltl** of the Southern District of New York. Both sides received tough questioning from the judge, on the issue of standing and on the merits.

A comprehensive government report on the wiretapping program, just released by the inspectors general of five agencies, including the CIA and the National Security Agency, questions its legality and effectiveness. The report indicates that the Bush administration used overhyped threat assessments to justify it and that the administration's initial legal review was inadequate. It also says officials "had difficulty citing specific instances" where the program aided the fight against terrorism.

It's a shame to see the Obama administration's Justice Department defending this dangerous statute. We're hoping Judge Koeltl will show better judgment and strike it down.

The Story of a Fixer

In these days of the disappearing newspaper, we hear a lot about the invisible costs of newsgathering. Sometimes the invisible cost is a life. Ian Olds's haunting documentary *Fixer: The Taking of Ajmal Naqshbandi*, which airs on

EDITORIAL

HBO August 17, reveals how the story of a war gets told: the brokering of deals so that an interview can take place; the bridging of vast distances in language, culture and geography between Western reporter and native source. In this process, a fixer is more than a facilitator. He is the conduit, a vital link in the chain that ultimately connects an audience—in this case, the largely American readers of this magazine—to fighters on the front lines of a war being waged in their name.

The Nation's Christian Parenti is the Western reporter in the film. Parenti hired Ajmal Naqshbandi in October 2004 when he first went to Kabul to write about the US occupation of Afghanistan. He stayed at Naqshbandi's guesthouse, along with "an anarchic mix of foreign reporters, contractors and other unidentified free agents," as he wrote in an award-winning piece about Naqshbandi published in *Playboy*. Naqshbandi helped him on all of the Afghanistan stories he wrote for *The Nation* in the wake of the US invasion: "Who Rules Afghanistan" (November 15, 2004); "Afghan Poppies Bloom" (January 24, 2005); "Afghanistan: The Other War" (March 27, 2006); and "Taliban Rising" (October 30, 2006).

It was Naqshbandi who enabled Parenti to interview Taliban fighters face to face on the desolate Zabul-Kandahar province border for "Afghanistan: The Other War." In a film rife with tension, that encounter makes for one of the most rattling scenes: several nervous Talibs cradle their guns, hanging back warily while Parenti shouts out his questions: "How does the Taliban sustain itself? Does it receive support from Pakistan?" The Taliban leader answers bluntly: "Yes, Pakistan stands with us. And on that side of the border we have our offices. Pakistan is supporting us. They supply us. Our leaders are there collecting help." The ominous approach of a reconnaissance plane

ends the interview. As their car speeds away, Parenti pronounces Ajmal "the best fixer in Afghanistan" and himself "the most relieved American reporter in Afghanistan."

Naqshbandi also worked for other reporters, including the Italian journalist Daniele Mastrogiacomio. In March 2007 Naqshbandi and Mastrogiacomio traveled with a driver, Sayed Agha, to the southern Afghan province of Helmand to interview the insurgent military commander Mullah Mohammed Dadullah for Mastrogiacomio's paper, *La Repubblica*. Things did not unfold as planned; the three were kidnapped by the Taliban. Days later, the captors released a grisly video showing Agha's decapitation. They demanded, as the price of the lives of the two remaining prisoners, the release of five imprisoned Taliban commanders. High-level negotiations ensued involving the Afghan president, Hamid Karzai; the Italian prime minister, Romano Prodi; and the Taliban leaders. Though much remains in dispute about what happened with these negotiations, the outcome was sadly predictable: the Western journalist was freed, but the Afghan fixer was not. Two weeks later, the Taliban executed Naqshbandi.

Fixer is a movie about a war without moral bearings as well as an eloquent tribute to Naqshbandi, who, according to Parenti, was driven to do his dangerous work not so much by political conviction as by his passion for the craft of newsgathering. It's not uncommon for the anonymous labor of a fixer in a foreign country to underpin the war reporting of a news organization like *The Nation*, but it is a tragic irony that Naqshbandi's contributions have been recognized only as a result of his death.

Bend It Like Obama?



As I write, the Senate Finance Committee has yet to release its version of healthcare reform legislation, and Harry Reid has announced that the Senate won't vote on any healthcare bill until after the August recess. This is worrisome. The future of progressive politics and the nature of the American social contract, not to mention the lives and health of millions of our fellow citizens, are up for grabs.

Strangely, though, you wouldn't really know it from listening to the pronouncements emanating from the White House. Instead, they're focused with laserlike precision on "bending the curve." Testifying before Congress in June, Council of Economic Advisors chair Christina Romer said she wants "to focus on slowing the growth rate of costs...the so-called curve-bending that can last for decades." Office of Management and Budget director Peter Orszag emphasized in a recent interview that "the legislation that emerges from this process has to contain key provisions that will bend the curve over the long term." And even before he took office, President Obama said that "the key is going to be medium-term and long-term, how do we bend the curve so that we start getting these deficits down to a manageable level?"

In this case the "curve" is the projected increase of healthcare

Calvin Trillin, Deadline Poet

Late-Night Comics Watch Sarah Palin's Formal Farewell Speech

It never occurred to them they'd be conceiving
Of life without Palin. They're crushed. It's like
grieving.

They're all sobbing now. Yes, their poor chests are
heaving.

No need for your tears, guys: she's not really leaving.

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expenses over the next several decades. Healthcare currently accounts for 17 percent of GDP (more than in any other industrialized nation), and its share is growing. This predicted inflation in healthcare costs will drive up the cost of Medicare and Medicaid, which if allowed to grow at the current rate will eventually bankrupt the government. Therefore, reforming healthcare is crucial to keeping America solvent. This is true and right and compelling enough, so far as it goes.

But in politics there are two kinds of issues: those that make your cheeks flush and inspire passion, and everything else. The integrity of our bodies, the care loved ones will or will not receive when they fall ill, the fear and misery that beset millions of people who are cruelly left to a prison of nagging illness because they don't have routine care—those are in the first category. Long-term fiscal deficit projections are decidedly in the latter.

In its healthcare messaging, the White House has taken an issue more intimate and immediate than perhaps any other in a voter's life and transformed it into an abstract, technical argument about long-term actuarial projections. It's a peculiar kind of reverse political alchemy: transforming gold into lead.

Of course, there's a certain logic to the White House approach: despite widespread public support for reforming the healthcare system, a desire for more choices and pervasive insecurity about the stability of coverage, a majority of people think that their health insurance is just fine. The trick then is to promise two contradictory things: that healthcare reform will change the system while leaving your healthcare intact. In what at first appeared a deft bit of jujitsu, the White House settled on the long-run-cost argument as the way to pull this off.

But now we're seeing the problems with this approach. For one, converting a moral and political argument into a technical and accounting one ends up ceding veto power to the accountants at the Congressional Budget Office. In a Beltway version of *Revenge of the Nerds*, every time a Democratic bill comes out of committee it's sent to the CBO to be "scored"—that is, to evaluate how much it will cost and how much it will "bend the curve" on future costs. So far, the results have been mixed. CBO head Doug Elmendorf has been skeptical about the gains to be had from measures like health IT and wellness programs, and both the House and Senate bills have been scored as revenue neutral over the next ten years. In another context that would be great news, but since healthcare is being sold as a way to reduce the deficit, revenue neutral doesn't quite cut it.

The other problem is broader than just these pieces of legislation. Obama has inherited a shared political vocabulary in Washington (with phrases like "fiscal discipline," which he himself employs) that shapes the contours of the possible and semantically militates against progressive politics at every invocation. If "fiscal discipline" meant that politicians support tax increases on the wealthy or cuts to the military budget to pay for programs, it would be a useful concept. But what "fiscal discipline" means in Washington is cutting government. It means no taxing and no spending. It means "pain" and "sacrifice" and gutting the welfare state. When politicians say they're "fiscally conservative," what it actually means is they're conservative. Full stop.

Even with his mandate and the broad social forces moving America toward a progressive majority, Obama doesn't have the time (and may not have the inclination) to undo three decades of accumulated right-wing, antigovernment rhetoric. So in order to strike while the iron is hot, he's attempting to use the language of fiscal conservatism to pull off a marginally progressive shift in the social contract.

But the rhetoric of "fiscal conservatism" also empowers the enemies of reform. When "moderate" Democratic senators on the Finance Committee, Max Baucus and Kent Conrad, finally unveil their secretly crafted version of healthcare reform, which reports indicate will include neither an employer mandate nor a public option, they can claim it fulfills the president's goal of "bending the curve." By cutting subsidies and reducing the number of Americans covered, their plan could still manage to come in under the magical \$1 trillion mark. Since the CBO's Elmendorf has been intimately involved in crafting the bill, that seems assured. What Congress could end up with, then, is a bill that costs less than others but doesn't, you know, provide universal healthcare.

The policy argument the president is making is sound: more government intervention, a public option and broader coverage will reduce costs in the long run. But this causes so much cognitive dissonance that mainstream media figures are incredulous. And that skepticism, along with industry propaganda claiming that a public option will limit choices, is, not surprisingly, showing up in public opinion. A recent *Washington Post/ABC News* poll found support for Obama's healthcare agenda at 49 percent, down from 57 percent in April.

So what to do? If there's a silver lining to the fact that Congress will enter its August recess without a bill, it's that the White House and advocates of real reform will have a chance to modify their pitch. If there was ever a time for Obama's vaunted and much-anticipated grassroots army Organizing for America (OFA) to do its thing, it's now. Since it's closer to the actual lived experience of voters, OFA may have superior instincts about what kinds of messages resonate. Recently it undertook an effort to compile stories from people about their experiences with a broken healthcare system, like this one:

I am 36 years old and have Blue Shield HMO health insurance coverage through my employer. In January 2009, I was diagnosed with metastatic (stage 4) breast cancer.... My doctors prescribed a medication that targets and removes the cancer throughout the body like a "smart bomb"; however Blue Shield of California denied coverage of my doctors' recommended treatment. Blue Shield also denied a radiation procedure that would target and remove the two lesions in my brain. In both cases, Blue Shield denied the original requests and subsequent appeals I filed on the grounds that the treatments are not a medical necessity. I have learned that insurance companies will use "medical necessity" as an excuse to not cover treatment when it appears that the patient is "too sick" (read: not worth it).

Stories like this strike me as a whole lot more potent than talk about "bending the curve."

CHRISTOPHER HAYES

Eric Alterman

Class, Not 'Race'

What is so amazing about the current racial contretemps that is obsessing the punditocracy is its distance from the actual events in Cambridge on July 16. Sure, it fits people's stereotypes, both black and white, whether they tend to identify the culprit as the racist cop or the full-of-himself Harvard professor. But although Officer James Crowley's behavior in arresting Henry Louis Gates Jr. was indefensible—who can defend arresting a sick, middle-aged man who walks with a cane, threatened no one and had shown his ID because you don't like his tone of voice?—that hardly makes it racist. Crowley, who has led classes at the Lowell Police Academy in how to avoid racial profiling, made no reference to Gates's race during the confrontation. (And the neighborhood *has* been prone to home invasion.) When Gates initially claimed, "You're not responding because I'm a black man and you're a white officer," nothing that took place on his property that day gave him cause for this suspicion.

Virtually everyone, white or black, with whom I spoke or e-mailed assumed the same racialized context. I didn't, however, because this white-boy columnist of yours—rather, um, stupidly—got himself arrested and handcuffed at a presidential debate in New Hampshire in 2007 for reasons remarkably similar to those that ensnared Gates at his home.

The issues I faced were two. Was the cop who I felt was harassing me going to give me his name and badge number? And was I going to conduct myself in the obsequious manner he seemed to demand? (To be honest, had I imagined for a second that he might arrest me for the crime of calling him "dude" when asking him to stop interrupting me while I was discussing—quite calmly and politely—the incident with his superior officer, I would have kept my mouth shut.) It was obviously nothing racial, but when I told people the details of what happened, the reaction often was. A federal judge I met at a book party told me she thought all privileged white media types should be forced to undergo the same experience to better understand what it is like to be a young black man in America.

Gates not only racialized the issue with Officer Crowley; he did so immediately in the media. "Really it's not about me—it's that anybody black can be treated this way, just arbitrarily arrested out of spite," he explained. And virtually all of the commentary about the incident has focused on race. Michael Eric Dyson said Gates had committed the crime of "HWP, housing while black." Stanley Fish explained, "The problem is again the legitimacy of a black man living in a big house." A much-discussed essay by someone calling himself "Phantom Negro" attacked Gates, who was alleged to believe himself immune to the kind of harassment routinely doled out to black men by cops in this country. "He all but says, Do I look like that type of

(black) person? I was wearing a blazer and a polo shirt!" The nastiness aside, this echoes a point Gates made in a brilliant *New Yorker* essay he wrote after the O.J. Simpson verdict, quoting Spike Lee, who said, "The police 'don't really bother black people once they are a personality,'" and Roland Gift of the Fine Young Cannibals, who said, "I'm not black. I'm famous."

Barack Obama also fell into the trap of attaching a racialized reading to the incident, no doubt pleasing many liberals and leftists. California Representative Barbara Lee announced at a news conference of the Congressional Black Caucus, "I think the president was right on target. We come from communities where some of us...have been racially profiled. [This is an] example of the unfinished business in America and inequalities and the racism that continues to exist."

Of course, conservatives, sensing an opening in Obama's critical comments about a white cop—any white cop—provided a near-perfect mirror image. Heather Mac Donald accused the president of "promoting racial paranoia," as if there were no statistics demonstrating the enormous racial disparity in arrests of black and Latino men for crimes they did not commit. Rush Limbaugh told Fox that Obama was "angry...not proud" of his country. Glenn Beck claimed that Obama's response demonstrated a "deep-seated hatred for white people." And the National Republican Senatorial Committee launched banner website ads asking for

a vote on whether Obama's comments were "presidential."

Given my profound admiration for Skip Gates, I'm saddened to say that I share the judgment of Glenn Loury, who said in a *New York Times* op-ed that he finds "laughable, and sad, Professor Gates's declaration that he now plans to make a [PBS] documentary film about racial profiling"—though for different reasons. Loury is understandably concerned about the lower-class blacks and Latinos who get the brunt of police mistreatment. Think about it: how many of the people who share the views of Limbaugh, Mac Donald and the GOP leadership are likely to be moved by a PBS documentary? Racism is poison, to be sure, but so, unfortunately in our culture, is talking about it. As Wynton Marsalis observed to Gates in *The New Yorker*, regarding O.J., "You want your side to win.... And the thing is, we're still at a point in our national history where we look at each other as sides."

Given that no racial profiling took place here, and we live in media world driven by cable idiots and Murdoch minions, this is not the "teachable moment" for which liberals and civil rights groups are so understandably eager. But it may be a moment to secure universal healthcare, restore the Bill of Rights and stimulate genuine income growth for workers of all colors if we can somehow move past this nonsense. As nobody (usually) knows better than Barack Obama, it is far better to focus on what unites us. Class, not race, is a winner in American politics. Just ask our newest media sensation, Officer James Crowley. ■



Gary Younge

Beer and Sympathy

Taxi drivers provide a perverse service to the racial conversation when they refuse to pick up black people. Clearly it would be better if they stopped, so that we wouldn't be left hailing the night air like fools or relying on white friends to sneak one past the censor like supplicants.

But if anyone is going to experience racial hardship, let it be the cab riders. For if you can afford to take a cab, then it is probably not a bad thing to be reminded that racism brooks no exceptions—up to and including the ability to pay. Racism discriminates against people on the grounds of race. Just like it says on the packet. It can be as arbitrary in its choice of victim as it is systemic in its execution. And while it never works alone (but rather in cahoots with class, gender and a host of other rogue characters), it has political license to operate independently.

It's a basic lesson at relatively low cost. And yet the arrest of Harvard professor Henry Louis Gates Jr. at his home in Cambridge, Massachusetts, suggests we are doomed to keep repeating the lesson. Barack Obama was right when he referred to the arrest as a "teachable moment," but given the brouhaha that has followed, it seems that even a moment involving the nation's most prominent black intellectual teaches us nothing.

This lesson should come in two parts.

First, all such tales attempt to stage racism as a crude morality play, with individuals as absolute victims and absolute villains, rather than as a system of oppression that works primarily through institutions. The victim must have no priors and no drugs. And unless the perpetrator is photographed with a billy club in hand and uses racial slurs that are recorded on tape, we are supposed to give him the benefit of the doubt.

For an individual, that is fair. For a system, it is farcical. While it may be intriguing to speculate about what two people may or may not have been thinking, feeling and intending at any given moment, the proof of racism is in the odds. Black people in America fall foul of not just the law of the land but the law of probabilities as well. They are more likely to be stopped, searched, arrested, convicted and executed. A ridiculous black man and a ridiculous white man do not stand the same chances when put before a man with a badge, gun or gavel. The figures bear this out, and at the end of the day, nooses and burning crosses shouldn't be necessary to demonstrate racism's reach.

Second, the fact that racism might affect a Harvard professor is amazing only if one buys into the idea that black people who have reached a certain status should be exempt from racism. If you believe that, then the problem with Gates's arrest is not racism. It's that he was treated like a regular black person. The issue moves from "If it happened to him it really can happen to anybody" to "It shouldn't have happened to him because he is a somebody."

Which brings us back to Obama, who first said the Cambridge police acted "stupidly," only to then "recalibrate" his remarks before inviting the arresting officer, James Crowley, and Gates to the White House for beers and reconciliation. This was primarily remarkable because, for reasons both pragmatic and strategic, Obama's interventions in matters of race are so very rare.

So it is curious that he would use the considerable influence he has in this area to defend a tenured Harvard professor who was detained for a few hours. Indeed, the only other public pronouncement Obama has made about race since his election was delivered just a week before Gates's arrest, at the NAACP conference. On the organization's centenary he paid homage to the civil rights movement and, recognizing the inequalities bequeathed by segregation, he started talking about parenting.

"We've got to say to our children, Yes, if you're African-American, the odds of growing up amid crime and gangs are higher," Obama said. "Yes, if you live in a poor neighborhood, you will face challenges that somebody in a wealthy suburb does not have to face. But that's not a reason to get bad grades. That's not a reason to cut class.... No one has written your destiny for you.... That's what we have to teach all of our children. No excuses. No excuses."

These two interventions feel like the Talented Tenth circling the wagons. There are a huge number of explanations for black underachievement in this country, none of which are merely "excuses." But Gates's experience also gave the lie to Obama's exhortations. Gates got good grades, probably never cut school and does not live amid crime and gangs. If he had, the incident might have ended up in anything from a police record to his death while never even making the local paper. Not that Gates didn't have a legitimate grievance. But he probably could have handled the matter without the help of the commander in chief.

The same cannot be said for, say, Troy Davis, who sits on death row in Georgia for the murder of an off-duty police officer, which he insists he did not commit. Seven of the nine witnesses who identified Davis have recanted or contradicted their original testimony, which they claim was made under police coercion. One of the remaining two is also a suspect in the crime. Desmond Tutu, the pope and Jimmy Carter (all conspicuously silent on the Gates saga) have called for a new trial or evidentiary hearing. This is a matter where Obama's involvement could tip the balance between life and death.

As I write, the beers are in the presidential fridge. After their drink, Gates will go back to Harvard, Crowley will return to the force, Obama will stay in the White House. Nothing about law or race, not even the national conversation, will have changed. And Troy Davis will remain on death row. For now the only beer he can expect will be with his last meal. And he will be drinking alone. ■



LETTER FROM A STATE IN CRISIS

MARC COOPER



*There is science, logic, reason; there is thought verified by experience.
And then there is California.*

—Edward Abbey

Duroville, California

Poking around this jumble of ramshackle trailers lined up along a dozen dusty, unpaved roads on the outskirts of the Torres-Martinez Indian reservation, surrounded by the barren and baking Southern California desert on three sides and a fetid, smoking rubbish dump on the fourth, you'd think naming this place Duroville was nothing short of a cynical, deliberate joke. *Duro*, in Spanish, means "hard" or "tough." Duroville. You know, Hard Times Town.

Instead, it's just a cutting coincidence. A decade ago, sensing opportunity amid a severe housing shortage for Mexican-born farmworkers who toil in the nearby fields, local resident Harvey Duro opened up this land for any campesino willing to park his trailer for about \$500 a month. So what if there was no running water, no plumbing, no health regulation of any sort and if, in general, Duroville was really no better than the Dust Bowl-era labor camps described in *The Grapes of Wrath*?

Yet the 3,000 or so mostly Purépecha Indians (from the Mexican state of Michoacán) who populate this outpost between posh Palm Springs and the near-dead Salton Sea have fought relentlessly—and successfully, thanks to a recent court order—for the right to keep building this hardscrabble hamlet and are adamantly grateful for the modest haven it offers them and their families. Especially on a summer day like this, when the mercury tops 112. "Thank God for Duroville," said 45-year-old farmworker Elias. "Without this, where would we have to live?"

Elias knows of what he speaks. Just a few miles up the road, in the preposterously named flyspeck town of Mecca, several dozen of his co-workers simply sleep in their cars in the parking lot of El Toro Market. Riverside County officials, resigned to

this degradation, are caring enough, or at least are realistic enough, not to evict them and instead provide toilets and weekly portable showers. "Things here are worse, worse, worse than ever," said Emanuel Benitez, a community outreach worker at the local office of California Rural Legal Assistance. "These people make about \$13,000 a year. They have no money for rent. And anyway, there are no places here to rent."

All this, a mere two hours southeast of 90210.

As recently as a few years ago, it would have been an easy reporter's trick to juxtapose the Fourth World conditions of Mecca and Duroville with the lush golf courses, seven-figure mansions and glittering casinos thirty minutes away in the Palm Springs valley in order to prove that two very different Californias coexist, blithely ignorant of each other.

Nowadays, that seems too facile. Certainly, the socioeconomic distance between the two extremes remains vast, if not immeasurable. But now we are talking about degrees of pain and comfort rather than separate social universes. The city of Cabazon, for example, home to one of those mega-rich casinos, recently clocked in with a 30 percent unemployment rate. The wealthiest enclaves of California have hardly been driven into misery, but no social stratum is exempt from the crash of The Dream. A morning's ride west of Palm Springs, on the shimmering Orange County coast, the \$500-a-night St. Regis-Monarch Beach resort, where AIG sponsored a free-spending bash last fall, just days after getting a federal bailout, has been seized by Citigroup. Like a record number of properties in California, the St. Regis has an "underwater" mortgage, owing \$300 million on a hotel now worth maybe a third of the debt. Up the same coast, the ritzy San Francisco Four Seasons resort just defaulted on a \$90 million loan. The rich, it turns out, aren't that different from us anymore. Even they are traveling less and cutting back on hot stone massages.

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Let's make it easy to understand. California might be suffering its worst drought in decades, but the entire Golden State is underwater. Goodbye to those timeworn, bubble-gum-colored fantasies of the Endless Summer, California Girls and gleaming, pool-pocked suburbs. Hello to a new set of descriptors: "Bankrupt." "Ungovernable." "California Nightmare." "Failed State."

You know something is radically wrong when the mere act of the governor and the legislature agreeing on a budget to close a \$26 billion deficit after months of haggling is hailed in bold headlines. Or maybe you get the message when you're a state contractor and you get an IOU instead of a paycheck and then find out the banks will no longer honor your scrip. Or you see that state unemployment rates are nudging 12 percent; that in LA County the poverty rate hovers near 20 percent; that some of the thousands of teachers who received pink slips are on hunger strike, while California schools are ranked forty-seventh in the nation; that the state college system has suspended admissions for spring 2010, raised fees 20 percent and forced its faculty to take unpaid leave two days a month; that thousands of state workers are being laid off and those who remain must take three furlough days a month for the rest of the year; that protesters in wheelchairs are blocking the halls of the Capitol; that a number of state parks are being closed; that California's bond rating is just above junk level; that Southern California had its highest peak in personal bankruptcies last year and that so far this year they're up 75 percent over that; and that one in four capped mortgages in the United States is in California.

Recently, two Democratic representatives from the Central Valley appeared before a Congressional committee and, comparing their region's economic devastation to Katrina, asked to be declared a federal disaster area eligible for emergency relief. According to a Brookings Institution report, among twenty of the economically weakest metro areas in the country, four are in the Central Valley.

One of them is the capital, Sacramento. In another, the Merced-Stockton area, the 70 percent drop in housing prices is so steep that homes there don't even qualify for federal recovery assistance. That's on top of the estimated 5 million impoverished Californians who have no cash assistance whatsoever.

Those east of the state line tempted by the allure of *schadenfreude* ought to think twice. California has the eighth-largest economy in the world and produces 12 percent of the national GDP. There can be no solid national economic recovery without a resurrection of California—something not very likely in the short term.

"It's a perfect storm," said veteran political consultant Allan Hoffenblum, co-editor of the nonpartisan *California Target Book*, which tracks all of the state's political districts. With the high tide of the Great Recession battering the Left Coast, state government, instead of shoring up what it could, melted into what Hoffenblum calls "total dysfunction."

"During this crisis, no individual or institution has been able

to assert any real leadership and bring people together for a common cause," he added. "This has created a power vacuum, allowing everyone to have a veto over everyone else. A weak Assembly speaker. A weak Senate leader. A weak governor. Arnold has flip-flopped so many times that there's nobody in Sacramento who trusts his word."

Nor is this by any stretch a strictly partisan issue. California is solidly blue. And although its Democrat-dominated legislature has a miserable 14 percent overall favorability rating, that rating rises to only 19 percent among Democratic voters. Californians are as liberal as anybody "at the federal level," said Mark DiCamillo, director of the respected Field Poll. "They're more supportive of national healthcare than the national average. But it's also true that Californians remain somewhat tightfisted when it comes to increasing state taxes."

California's political and economic crisis didn't begin with the current economic slump but has been brewing for decades. "You could go back to 1933, with the requirement approved by voters that you need a two-thirds majority to approve the budget," said Sherry Bebitch Jeffe, a USC-based political scientist. "Obviously there's Prop 13, which made things worse; there's the ballot-box budgeting—earmarking money for specific programs—that everyone from Arnold Schwarzenegger to Rob Reiner has used. And the runaway gerrymandering. It all makes flexibility impossible, and it empowers the special interests."

"No question the system is broken," said liberal Los Angeles

'The system is broken. It's a state on the brink, families falling through the cracks with IOUs as a safety net.'
—LA Mayor Villaraigosa

Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, who recently decided not to run for governor next year and whose city is grappling with a \$530 million deficit. "It's a state on the brink, families falling through the cracks with IOUs as a safety net. It's mind-boggling to me how little controversy there is over the IOUs."

Maybe it's because Californians are so used to failure from Sacramento. For almost every one of the past twenty years, the state government failed to reach a budget agreement by the July 1 fiscal deadline. Indeed, in 1992 Governor Pete Wilson had to resort briefly to issuing IOUs. But this season's deadlock, finally (or more probably, temporarily) resolved after a near twenty-four-hour session of the legislature on July 24, took on high drama. "I don't know if it's fair to say, but it was like Arnold thought he was starring in his own *Gunfight at the O.K. Corral* movie and didn't give a damn that the movie house was burning down around him," said one LA City Council staffer.

In February the Democratic majority proposed to-the-bone budget cuts, but their offset measures to increase taxes on oil extraction, vehicle registration and tobacco enraged Republicans and evoked veto threats from the governor. Because California is one of only three states that require a two-thirds majority to

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approve a budget or even a tax increase, the small GOP minority had just enough votes to block passage. And entrenched gerrymandering makes their seats invulnerable, allowing them to take the most extreme positions. "For me it has been heart-breaking," said Democratic Assemblyman Kevin de León, one of ten conferees on the budget. "Back in February we came up with a good budget but with those two minor taxes—on oil and tobacco. That money would have gone right into education. But because of the two-thirds rule, and even though a majority wants it, we get handcuffed by a small group."

Aggravating matters, Governor Schwarzenegger took an intractable "no new taxes" position and then went a step further, saying the crisis was an opportunity to make "structural reforms." Translation: the governor demanded radical shrinkage of the public sector, including virtual abolition of CalWorks, the state welfare program, and a rollback of state employee pensions. He even threatened the "nuclear option": suspension of Prop 98, which requires that 40 percent of state revenues be channeled into schools. Four years ago, when Schwarzenegger attempted to impose a similar far-reaching conservative agenda through a

When the budget details were unveiled, it was like viewing the emaciated corpse of a once great state.

set of referendums, he was mightily slapped down by voters and forced to apologize. Now, it seemed, he was trying to hold the state hostage to these draconian changes as the price of a budget deal. "He just got it in his head that his time is up and his legacy must be long-term reform," said Bebitch Jeffe. "So he's using the short-term budget as leverage. Either he doesn't understand, or he's taking a mammoth risk."

"Some of the cuts proposed by the governor are unimaginable," said Barbara O'Connor, political analyst at Cal State, Sacramento, a few days before the budget deal was reached. "In the end," she predicted, "it will be declared a win-win. No one will love it. Everyone will accept it."

Maybe. Because in the end, while Schwarzenegger was proposing Armageddon, the Democrats settled for mere catastrophe. When the budget details were unveiled, it was like viewing the emaciated corpse of a once great state. There are no new taxes. But hammer blows hit the poor, the elderly, the infirm and students and will keep them staggering for years. The deal called for almost \$8 billion to be taken from education; more than \$1 billion from state worker pay; an equal amount from Medi-Cal, the state's Medicaid program; \$375 million from CalWorks; \$226 million from home healthcare, in which patients and caregivers will now have to be fingerprinted; \$124 million from Healthy Families health insurance, which means thousands of children will be wait-listed for coverage; and more than \$4 billion confiscated from local governments, which will create a ripple effect of collateral damage. The proposed taxes on oil extraction, tobacco sales and vehicle registration were penciled out; the budget was balanced only through a set of accounting

gimmicks, which merely kicked the crisis down the road a few months. The only winners in this deal were felons, who won a \$1.2 billion cut in prison funding, which would reduce the prison population by some 27,000.

"It was like a suspense movie," said a jubilant governor, who later showed up in a web video happily brandishing a carving knife. "But we have accomplished a lot." Said Democratic Senate leader Darrell Steinberg, "We have cut in many areas that matter to real people, but I think we have done so responsibly. This is a sober time."

Other reactions were less sanguine. The second-largest public employees union, the Service Employees International, whose members have taken a 15 percent pay cut, has mailed out strike authorization forms and is threatening a statewide shutdown to forestall more cuts. SEIU Local 1000 president Yvonne Walker sent a letter to Schwarzenegger saying, "Governor, we've sacrificed. And now we've reached our limit."

The threat of an immediate lawsuit by more than 180 city and county governments forced the legislature to reduce the \$4 billion confiscation of local revenues to a \$2 billion "loan"

in its final version. LA Mayor Villaraigosa, who called the budget "highway robbery" on his official blog, says the suit might still go forward. Pressure from environmentalists successfully excised an agreement to resume offshore oil drilling. And GOP objections kept the 27,000 inmates locked up pending a separate vote later this year.

But in the end, the budget deal killed off any lingering notion of California as a land of plenty.

"When Democrats agree to a budget that is counter to why they are Democrats, it's time to hit the reset button," said Rick Jacobs, head of the 700,000-member California-based Courage Campaign. The liberal advocacy group has launched an ad protesting the budget, saying the state has been "closed."

But it's difficult to see how pressure from unions or progressive activists is going to be able to reverse or modify this budget in the short term—especially when it was approved by a liberal Democratic leadership. More likely, it will be revised—for the worse—if some of the projected revenues fall short. This is quite possible, given that economic analysts are predicting a second shattering wave of California home foreclosures, this time centered more on middle-class and high-end properties, while forecasters see unemployment rising through next year. Everyone knows the odds are that just a few months from now, the state will be right back in a sea of red ink, forcing even deeper cuts.

The state does need structural reform, if not exactly the way Schwarzenegger envisions it. What seemed like a fringe idea a year ago, when it was first floated in an op-ed piece, is gaining momentum: a constitutional convention of ordinary citizens that would rework the state structure. Its motor force is an unlikely suspect—a Northern California business group known as the Bay Area Council, whose scores of members span from the University of California, Davis, several media companies and banks to Hewlett-Packard, Google and Yahoo. The council is just one of a quickly multiplying array of bipartisan establishment groups pushing for a constitutional

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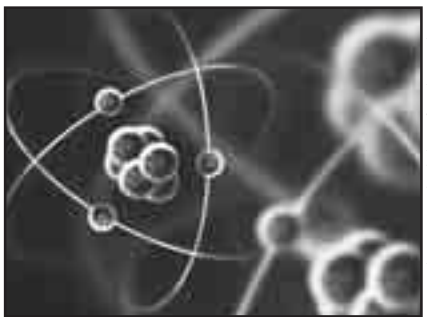
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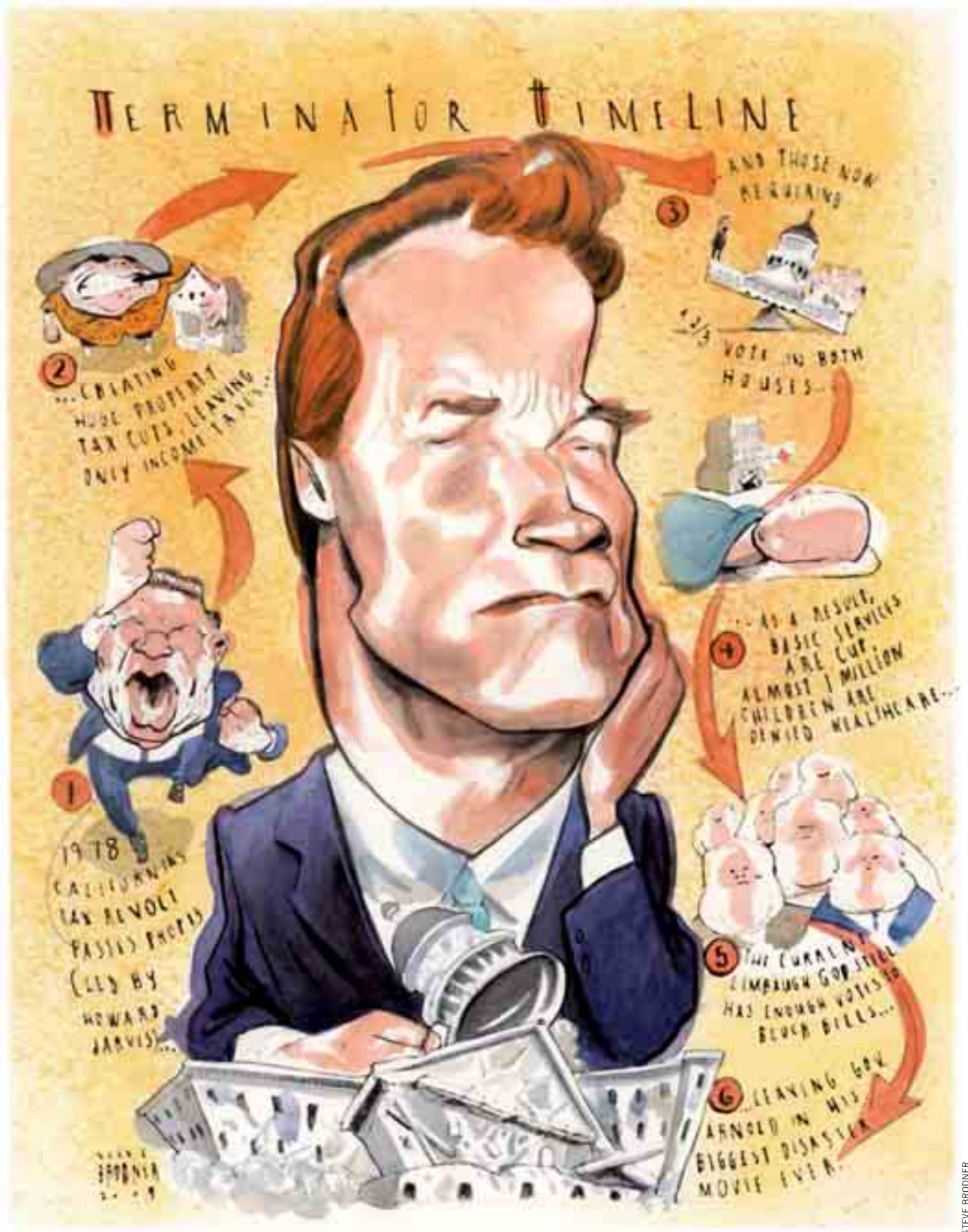
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convention or similarly urgent structural reforms, including Forward California, which is led by former Democratic Assembly Speaker Bob Hertzberg and whose board includes AFL-CIO officials. "This movement is getting very real with every passing day," said Council CEO Jim Wunderman, who wrote the op-ed last summer. "New leaders and groups are coming to us, asking how to get involved. There is real momentum here."

And that's not just self-promoting hype. On the weekend before the budget deal, several hundred Californians joined Wunderman at a USC conference hall to endorse and start planning for a convention, which could be mandated through the initiative process. Rick Jacobs of the Courage Campaign was on the dais balancing out any notion that this was strictly an initiative of the business community. So were LA Mayor Villaraigosa, who says he "absolutely endorses" the call for a convention; the LA city controller; the progressive president of the LA City Council; reps from the Mexican American Political Association; Common Cause; and several other activist groups. It was a clear manifestation of at least the germ of a nonpartisan, broad-based reform coalition. "We want this to be dispassionate and deliberate," said Wunderman. "Not done overnight. That's why we think a constitutional convention is the best way to go."

No one involved in the movement wants to take an overtly partisan position. But there's general agreement on what needs fixing: the two-thirds budgeting rule has got to go; the once progressive initiative process, which has been "hijacked by special interests," as Wunderman put it, has to be reformed; gerrymandering must end; term limits, which have crippled the legislature, must be stretched; open primaries must be considered; and, most important, something has to be done about that third rail of California politics, Prop 13 and the taxation system.

The 1978 measure reduced property tax to a painless 1 percent a year, but it skewed the rest of state revenue. With property taxes so low, 55 percent of revenue comes from personal income tax; 45 percent of that comes from the top bracket (most states like to keep personal income tax to one-third of revenue). The state is far too dependent on income tax: when times are good, there's plenty of money; when they're sour, California goes bust. In just the first five months of this year, revenues from this tax plummeted 34 percent.

In addition, more than 30 percent of Californians pay little or nothing in personal income tax. And the bottom 85 percent of taxpayers contribute only 16 percent of income tax. This is an uncomfortable reality; progressives who say "tax the rich" don't always realize that in California, wealthy individuals (if not corporations) are the tax base. Conservatives, meanwhile, won't admit that intransigent defense of Prop 13 has turned California into a second-rate state. Even sectors of the business community are worried about the future.

While Prop 13 attracts new critics daily, few are confident it can be repealed. When Schwarzenegger ran for governor in 2003, he showcased Warren Buffet as his economic adviser. "Buffet said we had to get rid of Prop 13 and poof! we never saw him again," laughed political analyst O'Connor. More realistic than repeal is a "split roll," which would raise business

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property tax and close gaping loopholes that allow large corporations to pay less property tax than Ma and Pa. "Prop 13 has been a sacred cow, but it's time to look at it again," said Villaraigosa. "When people voted for it, they never expected the real beneficiaries were going to be big corporations." The San Francisco Assessor, Phil Ting, and the nonprofit California for Tax Reform are now preparing a ballot initiative, perhaps in 2012, to amend Prop 13 to tax commercial property, which some analysts believe could produce more than \$7 billion in additional annual revenue.

What Californians really don't want is a permanent parlor game. In a show of defiance in May, they overwhelmingly voted down a package of initiatives backed by the governor and legislature that would at least have forestalled the current crisis. Everyone has his own interpretation. "Forget about eliminating term limits and the two-thirds requirement," darkly predicted analyst Hoffenblum. "The voters will never go for it. They are too distrustful of the politicians." DiCamillo of the Field Poll is also pessimistic about the possibility of structural tax reform. "Only sin taxes are palatable," he said. "Our polling shows no inclination toward shared sacrifice, because the voters them-

selves are already hurting too much. They're so worried about their own pocketbooks that there isn't much sentiment toward looking at this in a more mutual way."

California has always been as much a state of mind as a physical reality. The state's natural resources, along with its inhabitants' capacity to exploit them, made The Dream more likely than not. But now it's time to stop dreaming, says D.J. Waldie, who has the unique experience of living through this crisis as both an official of an LA suburb and a prizewinning author who plumbs the Golden State zeitgeist. "The middle class and the near middle class have been missing in action in paying for the sort of life they think California owes them," he said. "Instead, they believe that someone else should pay for the California Dream. Smokers. Drinkers. Gamblers. Millionaires. But not me.

"We have sold ourselves a vision of California, but we are not psychologically or emotionally prepared to make the hard choices. We prefer to point our finger at 'waste, fraud, immigrants.' Those are all straw men. It conveniently avoids the question of what we want and what we want to give up." ■

Our Tattered State Safety Net

Deep in recession, the states are in critical need of federal aid to meet basic human needs.

by **GEORGIA LEVENSON KEOHANE**

On June 29 the Supreme Court ruled that states can enforce fair lending and consumer protection laws against national banks, overturning lower-court decisions holding that this authority belonged to federal regulators. The case, *Cuomo v. Clearing House*, originated in 2005 with an investigation by then-New York Attorney General Eliot Spitzer into high rates of subprime lending in black and Hispanic communities. Spitzer had found what he called "troubling" disparities in Federal Reserve data between the mortgage rates charged to minorities and those charged to white borrowers, and he sent letters to a number of national banks, including Citigroup and JPMorgan Chase, requesting information about their lending practices. The Clearing House Association, a trade group representing the issuers, sued to block Spitzer's request, maintaining that it was subject to oversight by the federal Office of the Comptroller of the Currency and not state law. The Supreme Court decided otherwise, in what civil and economic rights advocates are calling an important victory for consumer protection.

This case hinges on a Republic-old question of federalism—the balance of state and federal power in law enforcement. Spitzer's activism exemplifies what some have called progressive federalism—states stepping into the regulatory void left by reticent federal agencies. This kind of local muscle-flexing is not limited to the legal sphere. In recent years states have also taken



the lead in providing vital social services in response to federal retrenchment on critical safety-net programs. But times have changed. In this recession, while states can still play a central law enforcement role, they are in such dire financial straits that they lack the resources to meet the surge in basic human needs and

Georgia Levenson Keohane, who lives in New York City, writes and consults on social and economic policy.

have reached the limits of what could be called safety-net federalism. In this fiscal emergency the Obama administration must take up the slack, with more leadership and more federal dollars. The \$787 billion stimulus package began to shore up flagging state efforts, but much more needs to be done.

Clearing House underscores the importance of regulatory federalism in hard times. The conditions that prompted Spitzer's initial investigation—disproportionately high rates of subprime lending to blacks and Hispanics—have only worsened into foreclosures. The *New York Times* reported in May that in its own metropolitan region, defaults in predominantly minority census tracts are three times those in mostly white ones; in 85 percent of the most foreclosure-afflicted communities a majority of homeowners are black or Hispanic, reversing recent and important gains in homeownership in those communities. New findings from the Pew Research Center show similar data nationwide.

Behind these statistics, and antiseptic words like “pre-emption” and “devolution,” are the real-life stories—names, faces, evictions, anxious children—of poor people caught in the economic storm. Consider Olive Thompson, a 45-year-old nursing assistant, homeowner and single mother of four who was forced into bankruptcy, depleted her 401(k) and lost her job. When the payments on her adjustable-rate mortgage jumped, she lost her home, too. “It’s horrible,” Thompson told the *Times*. “I don’t know where I’m going.” Like so many others, Thompson is suffering the twin ravages of anemic regulation—allowing high-interest and possibly predatory subprime mortgages—and deep recession brought on by the collapse of banks that backed these loans in the first place. Current federal efforts to improve oversight of the financial services sector were anticipated and prodded by New York’s vigilance. Going forward, the states must continue to push the federal government to share in this watchdog role.

Recent changes to national environmental policy also illustrate the success of regulatory federalism in advancing reform. In 1966 California adopted emissions standards for motor vehicles. A quarter-century later, the federal Clean Air Act amendments of 1990 enacted a dual emissions standard, allowing states to adhere to the national requirements or to follow California’s more stringent regulations. In a reversal of federal policy, President Obama announced this spring that the United States will embrace the tougher California emissions and fuel-efficiency rules as the national standard beginning in 2012. A similar evolution has occurred on climate change, where the federal government during the Bush administration was egregiously slow to act. In 2006 California adopted the Global Warming Solutions Act to reduce all greenhouse gas emissions in the state by 25 percent over fifteen years. This was the first enforceable statewide emissions target, but by now twenty-one other states have emissions targets and goals in place.

In addition, states have acted in concert to galvanize federal action. In *Massachusetts v. Environmental Protection Agency*, twelve states sued the EPA to regulate carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases as pollutants when the EPA claimed it lacked the authority to do so under the Clean Air Act. In 2007 the Supreme

Court sided with the states. States have also forged a number of regional alliances in the face of federal inertia to combat climate change. The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, for example, comprising ten Northeastern states, is working to reduce greenhouse gas emissions via a cap-and-trade system. This kind of tradable emissions regime is at the heart of the national climate legislation, the Waxman-Markey climate bill, which narrowly passed the House in June. As with consumer protection, state activism on the environment provided an important national road map—and must continue to complement federal efforts in the years to come.

Unlike regulatory federalism, however, safety-net federalism—states taking the lead in providing and funding core social services—has been devastated by the recession. Across the country, states are broke, squeezed between precipitous drops in tax revenue and constitutional mandates (in every state but Vermont)

The heaviest cuts in social services are affecting the most vulnerable: early childhood education, public health and welfare block grants.

to balance their budgets. According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, forty-eight states are reporting deficits totaling nearly \$166 billion, projected to reach, cumulatively, \$350–\$370 billion by 2011. Although many states have attempted tax increases, these are politically challenging and often insufficient to close the gaps. Consequently, statehouses have been forced to cut vital social services at a time when the need for them is ever more desperate. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the federal stimulus package, includes assistance to states to help offset revenue shortfalls. Although in most states ARRA support has helped to avert more drastic cuts to healthcare, education and other public services, at its current level the stimulus will stanch only 40 percent of the hemorrhage. The federal government must reaffirm its financial and political commitment to girding the nation’s social safety net. In the short term, since the federal government can run deficits, this means sending more money to the states, either through a second stimulus bill or a more immediate cash infusion (*American Prospect* editor Robert Kuttner has suggested that Congress pass an emergency revenue-sharing law). Over the longer term, this means leadership on much-needed reforms.

State cuts to social services are occurring across the board, but the heaviest of them fall on programs serving the most vulnerable, where states shoulder a disproportionate—and now untenable—share of the financing burden. Take the case of early childhood education, a classic story of safety-net federalism. When funding for Head Start stagnated under the Bush administration (just the failure to keep pace with inflation amounted to a 13 percent slash in its budget), states responded by developing free pre-kindergartens. Between 2002 and 2008, state spending on pre-K doubled, from \$2.4 billion to \$4.6 billion, increasing enrollment by 60 percent to more than a million children. Today, because these pre-Ks remain a dis-

cretionary line item on most state budgets, they are subject to severe recessionary cuts. The Obama administration has wisely reclaimed a larger federal role in early childhood education, including a \$2 billion infusion for Head Start and Early Head Start programs. This is important progress toward ensuring universal access to high-quality preschool.

In recent years, states have also made important strides on healthcare by expanding coverage for the now 46 million uninsured Americans. In 2006, for example, Massachusetts enacted legislation aimed at universal statewide coverage by requiring people to purchase health insurance and subsidizing those with limited means. Many have cited the Massachusetts example as a possible model for universal healthcare at the national level. Other states expanded their S-CHIP programs to cover low-income children and families who could not afford private insurance but whose incomes exceeded the Medicaid threshold. Yet even before the recession, states struggled to cover these costs. On average, Medicaid accounts for 21 percent of a state's budget. In recent months the Medicaid rolls have swelled considerably, putting greater strain on states that cannot afford to keep people insured. (The Massachusetts plan, which depends in part on expanded Medicaid enrollment, is now in jeopardy. Tax revenues have lagged 35 percent, and even with increases in sales and other local taxes, the 2010 Massachusetts budget includes cuts to healthcare and mental healthcare, education, affordable housing and other human services.)

During the 2001 recession, which by almost every measure was milder than today's, thirty-four states cut eligibility for public health programs, resulting in loss of coverage for more than 1 million people. Although the federal stimulus plan will help bolster state funds for Medicaid, this is only a short-term fix. The \$33 billion reauthorization (and massive expansion) of the S-CHIP program is an important first step toward reinfusing state programs with federal dollars.

Welfare reform is perhaps the crowning example of the achievements—and limitations—of safety-net federalism. In 1996 Congress transformed Aid to Families With Dependent Children, a sixty-year-old entitlement program guaranteeing cash assistance to poor families, into Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, a time-limited benefits program intended to move welfare recipients into the workplace and toward economic independence. This act gave states the latitude to design their own welfare programs in exchange for TANF block grants: fixed sums to administer welfare reforms within federal welfare-to-work guidelines.

A number of studies show that states were initially successful in moving people from welfare rolls into the workplace. However, the TANF welfare-to-work model presumes there are jobs; in the face of today's 9.5 percent unemployment, welfare—perhaps the critical strand of the social safety net—is unraveling. The failure of welfare “reform” to account adequately for severe economic downturns is not simply the result of rigid work requirements; it reflects a larger structural defect in fixed-sum block grants that do not adjust enough for recessionary increases in need. As in the case of Medicaid, the economic recovery legislation provides additional resources when TANF funds fall short of the spike in welfare caseloads. Yet like the Medicaid supplement, this assistance, too, will not fully cover the deficit. Roughly 20 percent of the cost increase will be borne by the states, which can respond only by increasing spending (unlikely) or slashing TANF-related funding for things like childcare or protective services.

For more than a decade, states were beacons of regulatory and safety-net activism when the federal government fell short. Though state law enforcement soldiers on, when it comes to social welfare, the center must hold. We need vast sums of federal financial and political capital to help plug the \$350 billion state shortfall and to provide long-overdue leadership on the delivery of social services. ■

Unpopular Science

The crisis in journalism has gutted intelligent science reporting—just when we need it most.

by **CHRIS MOONEY AND SHERIL KIRSHENBAUM**

For twenty-three years Sabin Russell worked at the *San Francisco Chronicle*. A top medical writer specializing in global health and infectious diseases, Russell covered subjects ranging from bioterror threats to the risk of avian flu and traveled throughout Africa to report on the AIDS epidemic. He won numerous accolades, including a 2001 Science in Society Journalism Award from the National Association of Science Writers for his reporting on the flaws of the flu vaccine industry.

Then came March 30, 2009—his last day on the job.

Chris Mooney and Sheril Kirshenbaum are the authors of the new book Unscientific America: How Scientific Illiteracy Threatens Our Future (unscientificamerica.com), upon which this article is partly based.

Russell was at MIT, on leave from his paper for a fellowship. The struggling *Chronicle* had been cutting staff and now suddenly forced many older career journalists to either take a buyout or risk a reduced pension. At 56, Russell was at the peak of his game, but for him, as for many of his colleagues, there was really just one option. “We have not left journalism; journalism has left us,” Russell remarked recently from San Francisco, where he is setting up a freelance office and looking for work.

Now the painful irony: Russell was pressured out of his job just as swine flu murmurs began to emerge from Mexico. This was his beat; few reporters are better equipped to tackle such a difficult yet urgent story, one so rife with uncertain but potentially severe risk. Russell even tipped off his old employ-

er that the paper might want to get a jump on what was happening in Mexico City. "If I was covering this story now," he says, "I'd be all over the Southern Hemisphere. It's flu season there. How is Australia? How is the infrastructure to respond to a new strain holding up?"

Those are stories Russell won't be writing.

It's no secret the newspaper industry is hemorrhaging staff writers and slashing coverage as its business model collapses in the face of declining readership and advertising revenues. But less recognized is how this trend is killing off a breed of journalistic specialists that we need now more than ever—science writers like Russell, who are uniquely trained for the most difficult stories, those with a complex technical component that are nevertheless critical to politics and society.

We live in a time of pathbreaking advances in biotechnology and nanotechnology, of private spaceflight and personalized medicine, amid a climate and energy crisis, in a world made more dangerous by biological and nuclear terror threats and global pandemics. Meanwhile, advances in neuroscience are calling into question who we are, whether our identities and thought processes can be reduced to purely physical phenomena, whether we actually have free will. The media ought to be bursting with this stuff. Yet precisely the opposite is happening: even in places where you'd expect it to hold out the longest, science journalism is declining.

Take Mark Carreau, until recently the space reporter for the *Houston Chronicle*. He spent more than twenty years covering NASA, whose Johnson Space Center (JSC) lies in the *Chronicle's* backyard. Such expertise, however, failed to outweigh the need for newsroom cuts, and Carreau was laid off earlier this year. As one space wonk lamented on a blog on the occasion of Carreau's departure: "I'm guessing there are now more people in space than there are reporters in the JSC newsroom."

Or take the ailing *Boston Globe*, situated in a global center of science that leads the biotech industry. In March the paper dumped its specialized Monday "Health/Science" section, transferring health coverage to its arts and lifestyle pages and folding science reporting into its Monday business section. Soon after, the paper reduced staff significantly on its science desk. The *Globe's* decision wasn't about the relevance of science to readership; it was about the underlying economics.

The death of specialized newspaper science sections like the *Globe's* is a long-term trend—one that appears to be accelerating. From 1989 to 2005, the number of US papers featuring weekly science-related sections shrank from ninety-five to thirty-four. Many of the remaining sections shifted to softer health, fitness and "news you can use" coverage, reflecting the apparent judgment that more thorough science or science policy coverage just doesn't support itself economically.

And the problem isn't confined to newspapers. Just one minute out of every 300 on cable news is devoted to science and technology, or one-third of 1 percent. Late last year CNN cut its entire science, space and technology unit. The most prominent departure: Miles O'Brien, who covered the 2003 space shuttle *Columbia* disaster for the network.

How did the US media—serving a country that leads the

world in virtually every aspect of science—reach this point? Certainly it wasn't always this way.

Science journalism began as a specialized beat in the early twentieth century but burgeoned in the United States after World War II. The 1957 Soviet launch of Sputnik was an especially galvanizing event; in response, US newspapers ramped up their science content, and a generation of writers cut their teeth covering the "space race." Another boom came in the late 1970s and early '80s, when Carl Sagan's *Cosmos* series reached 500 million people globally, and fifteen new science magazines, eighteen new newspaper



PETER O. ZIERLEIN

science sections and seventeen new science TV shows were launched in the United States.

This "popular science" movement sought nothing less than to bring science to the entire public, to mediate between the technical and the lay, the wonky and the approachable. The thinking was that translating scientific knowledge into a form everyone could understand would help forge a more enlightened citizenry and, ultimately, a stronger democracy.

That ambition didn't last: deregulation and technological change would soon dramatically reshape the media industry. Policy moves during the Reagan and Clinton years, epitomized by the 1996 Telecommunications Act, helped foster mass media conglomeration, as a relatively small number of corporations began to pull together diverse media sectors—movies, television, book publishing, music, magazines, radio and many newspapers—and cram them into massive firms. Serious science journalism often fared poorly in this climate. Producing it required seasoned, highly trained journalists who expected to receive salaries commensurate with their experience and expertise. The conglomerates had a different plan—more revenue, less cost, rising stock prices.

Even as science coverage became squeezed in service to

the bottom line, another trend emerged that made it increasingly difficult to reach broad swaths of America with scientific information—the loss of common media sources shared by large segments of the populace. During television’s so-called golden age, the broadcast networks—ABC, CBS and NBC—provided a shared cultural experience and news environment and featured plenty of science. PBS joined them: Carl Sagan’s *Cosmos*, its greatest science program, was a product of this era.

Then along came cable TV, providing myriad channel alternatives for those who wanted to detach from serious news, and increasingly politicized platforms like Fox News and MSNBC for those who remained plugged in. And already the Internet’s transformative powers seem likely to make cable’s impact on the media seem trivial by comparison. Newspapers are on the verge of extinction, but we have millions of blogs to suit every interest and political persuasion, Google News to sift our headlines and Twitter to titillate.

In this context, science media outlets like the Discovery Channel still exist, as do programs like PBS’s *NOVA*—but only

If the Internet is most directly responsible for the decline of newspapers, then can science blogs and websites fill the gap?

as one niche among many. Even the pinnacle of newspaper science journalism, the *New York Times*’s Tuesday science section, reaches only perhaps a million people once a week, a small slice of America.

The problem with the decline of science journalism is not just that there is less attention overall to science; it’s that the remaining science coverage is less illuminating. Instead, it indulges in a variety of journalistic pathologies that thwart an improved public understanding of science.

As a rule, journalists are always in search of the dramatic and the new. When it comes to science, however, this can lead them to pounce on each “hot” new result, even if that finding contradicts the last hot result or is soon overturned by a subsequent study. The resulting staccato coverage can leave the public hopelessly exasperated and confused. Should you drink more coffee or less? Does global warming increase the number and intensity of hurricanes or not? Are vaccines safe, or can they cause an autism epidemic? Experienced science journalists know how to cover such topics by contextualizing studies and deferring to the weight of the evidence. Inexperienced journalists, though, are likely to leave audiences with a severe case of media whiplash.

Then there’s the problem of “balance”—the idea that reporters must give roughly equal space to two different “sides” of a controversy. When applied to science, especially in politicized areas, this media norm becomes extremely problematic. Should journalists really grant equal time to the

small band of scientists who deny the causal relationship between HIV and AIDS when the vast majority of researchers accept the connection between the two? Should they split column space between the few remaining global warming “skeptics” and scientific experts who affirm the phenomenon’s human causation? Again, experienced science journalists will know best how to cover such stories and will be aware of the scientific community’s very justifiable abhorrence of unthinking “balance.”

For a disturbing glimpse of what to expect from a media world with vastly fewer trained science journalists, we need only recount how much of the press managed to bungle the most important science-related story of our time: global warming. We were warned and warned again about climate change, yet for decades did nothing as the problem steadily worsened. In large part, that’s because the US public continues to rate global warming as a low priority, and politicians respond to that public. Both have been getting their cues about what matters from the media.

The mass media, however, got the climate story wrong in multiple ways—first, by covering it as a “he said, she said” controversy during the 1990s (bowing to pressure from special interests and their pet scientists, who strategically attacked the scientific consensus) and then, even after moving away from such “balanced” coverage, by providing far too little attention to the story overall—hardly proportionate to the grave planetary danger it poses.

Climate change keeps worsening, yes, but how often is it the kind of news that can trump all the other urgent matters demanding media attention?

In fact, though coverage of climate change in the worldwide newspaper media rose sharply in 2005 and 2006, it declined after that, apparently overshadowed by the economic collapse. But scientists are growing increasingly terrified of what global warming could do—among other things, submerge coastal cities—and are now contemplating further meddling with the climate system (so-called geoengineering) as a last-ditch effort to reverse it. We may yet escape such worst-case scenarios, but if we do, it won’t be thanks to the press.

Here an obvious question arises: if the Internet is most directly responsible for the decline of newspapers, then can science blogs and science-infused websites fill the gap?

Science content on the web is certainly booming. It’s estimated that there are some 1,000 science blogs, and that’s undoubtedly a very conservative figure. Science blogs often focus on hot-button topics such as vaccination, the teaching of evolution and the politics of climate change, and devote considerable time to parsing new research findings. Often written by scientists or science journalists, they’re highly attuned to the many problems that have plagued the coverage of science, like phony “balance,” and tend to avoid or even denounce them—with verve and attitude.

In other ways as well, the Internet has become the go-to place for science. According to the National Science Foun-

dation, it ranks second only to television among the leading sources of science information for the average citizen and is leaving other, older sources far behind. In particular, when Americans want to find information about a specific scientific topic, they go to the web far more often than they open a research book.

Undoubtedly, one *can* find excellent science information on the web, but the question is whether most people *will* find it. Newspaper science journalists in their heyday wrote for a broad and diverse slice of the public. On the Internet, though, it's all about finding your particular micro-community. The web atomizes us—and while it certainly empowers, it empowers good and bad alike. Accurate science and the most stunning misinformation thrive side by side—anti-vaccine advocates, anti-evolutionists and global warming deniers all have highly popular websites and blogs, and there is no reason to think good scientific information is somehow beating them back.

This problem was on full display in the 2008 Weblog Awards, a popularity contest that featured a tight race for Best Science Blog. The two leading contestants: PZ Myers's Pharyngula (scienceblogs.com/pharyngula), the online clearinghouse for confrontational atheism, and Watts Up With That (wattsup-withthat.com), written by former TV meteorologist Anthony Watts, a skeptic of the scientific conclusion that human activities have caused global warming. Both sites are polemical: one assaults religious faith; the other constantly attacks mainstream understanding of climate change.

In the end, Watts Up With That defeated Pharyngula, 14,150 votes to 12,238. The "science" contest came down to the religion-basher versus the misinformation-machine, and the misinformation-machine won. That speaks volumes about the form science commentary takes on the Internet.

That's not to say blogs lack any benefits; they have many. But the Internet is not unifying our culture around a comprehensive or even reliable diet of scientific information, and it isn't replacing what's being lost in the old media. Perhaps Sabin Russell put it best, on the very day he took his buyout from the *San Francisco Chronicle*. At 4:44 PM he posted his second entry on a social networking site that some tout as journalism's future. It read: "This is the way my career ends. This is the way my career ends. Not with a bang, but a Twitter." Russell had fourteen followers at the time.

Given that the decline of science journalism is being driven by overwhelming technological and economic forces, it might seem unstoppable. But perhaps instead, the answer lies outside the free market: with the creation of not-for-profit sources of science journalism and commentary, meant to last for long periods safely insulated from market upheaval. An example might be Climate Central, a new nonprofit that supplies a variety of journalistic content relating to climate change, including footage for television programs like PBS's *NewsHour With Jim Lebrer*.

Another group of nonprofits—universities—can take the lead in institutionalizing new priorities so that communication, a subject given notoriously short shrift among scien-

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tists in the past, becomes a focal point. Especially among the youngest generation of researchers—graduate students, recent PhDs and postdocs—there’s a hunger for training in media outreach. These scientists want to obtain the skills that can help them explain their work to a broader public, and there is hardly a time when they will have greater need for them than now, when the journalists who might once have been expected to do this work simply don’t have jobs any longer.

For such communication training to become more common, however, we’ll need a paradigm shift among the nation’s population of brilliant scientists. Immersed in vital research, they have paid relatively little attention to the business side of the media and how it affects them. They’ve tended to view the press as having a high moral “responsibility” to cover research—period. In some sense, they still think we’re in the age of Edward R. Murrow. In fact, it’s the age of Bill O’Reilly.

In light of the media upheaval, scientists can no longer

assume that a responsible, high-minded press will treat their ideas with the seriousness they deserve, delivering them to policy-makers and the public for sober consideration. Instead, partisan media will convey diametrically opposed versions of where science actually stands on any contentious subject—consider, for example, the difference between how Fox News and NPR cover climate change—even as most of the public (and many policy-makers) will tune out science more or less completely, besieged by other information options.

That’s the media reality we live with, and facing it head-on is necessary not only for scientists but for everyone who cares about the impact of science and good information on public policy. We must stop assuming today’s media will dutifully carry the best and most reliable knowledge to policy-makers and the American public. Rather, it falls to us to shift gears and carry that knowledge to the entirety of the remaining media, and well beyond. In the latter endeavor, we may have to create media of our own. ■

Letters

(continued from page 2)

Life Under the Bridge

AUSTIN, TEX.

Re Ben Ehrenreich’s “Tales of Tent City” [June 22]: There are many who would agree with Tom M. that homelessness can be traced back to President Reagan in the mid-1980s and his reduction of the funds to house our nation’s poor. Ehrenreich quotes former Tent City resident John Kraitz saying the cause of homelessness is “falling wages and rising rents.” Then Joan Burke of Loaves and Fishes is quoted saying that the causes of homelessness are far from hazy: “It’s the lack of housing that people can afford.”

There are two types of people experiencing homelessness: those who can work and those who cannot. According to the last several US Conference of Mayors reports, no one in this nation can afford a one-bedroom apartment at the current federal minimum wage. That means the government itself has set a standard that continues to create homelessness. And Supplemental Security Income (SSI), for those who cannot work, is about half of that failed standard.

The answer is simple, really: economics—affordability. The single most expensive item in the budget of nearly every American is housing. Our Federal Poverty Guideline, established in 1963, is based on food. But in 1963 food made up only 23 percent of our monthly family budget, and housing made up 29 percent. Today, food

makes up only 16 percent, and housing makes up 50 to 60 percent. We need to link the federal minimum wage to the local cost of housing. This way, if a person works forty hours a week, he or she can be assured of putting a roof over his/her head (other than a bridge) no matter what the price rises to. Similarly, we need to link SSI to the local cost of housing so that disabled folks everywhere can be housed (see UniversalLivingWage.org for details).

RICHARD R. TROXELL

National Coalition for the Homeless

US Mess in Colombia

OAKLAND, CALIF.

Teo Ballvé, in “The Dark Side of Plan Colombia” [June 15], brilliantly details the ways that US economic aid to Colombia has gone to paramilitary death squad leaders and associates who have stolen land for palm oil plantations. US assistance has also been directed to officers from Colombian army units with the worst records of collaborating with paramilitaries and of killings and other abuses of civilians.

State Department officials claim that they vet all military units proposed for assistance to ensure they have not committed human rights abuses; and they claim that the vetting process for Colombia is a model of rigor. But officers and soldiers from more than 500 Colombian military units that had not been vetted received military training and other aid, according to a document the

State Department released last year. These units include battalions in the 17th Brigade, which, together with paramilitary gunmen, massacred and forcibly displaced thousands of peasants in the Urabá region Ballvé describes. In addition, Washington vetted and approved assistance to army brigades operating in the heart of paramilitary country and units that killed civilians to add to the body counts by which they measured their success.

US law prohibits assistance to units with credible records of gross rights violations, and Washington has consistently violated this law in Colombia by training officers from unvetted units. But the law doesn’t require any evaluation of the impacts on human rights after training and other lethal assistance is given, so policy-makers never measure the human consequences of feeding war. The anticipated reform of the Foreign Assistance Act should require this evaluation for all foreign military aid. More fundamentally, respect for human rights should be a central objective of such aid.

JOHN LINDSAY-POLAND, *co-director*
Latin America Program
Fellowship of Reconciliation

Correction

Liza Featherstone’s “Out of Reach: Is College Only for the Rich?” [June 29] erroneously stated that faculty at Muhlenberg College were laid off. In fact, staff, not faculty, lost their jobs.

Books & the Arts.

A Gross Unfairness

by STEVEN EPSTEIN

A report issued in 2006 by two non-governmental organizations, Human Rights Watch and Immigration Equality, describes the written response made in 1975 by the Immigration and Naturalization Service to an American citizen's petition to sponsor a foreign same-sex partner for legal residency in the United States. The INS denied the petition for the following reason: "You have failed to establish that a bona fide marital relationship can exist between two faggots." Except perhaps in the explicitness of language, federal policy toward same-sex binational couples has changed little since then. On June 3 of this year, Congress held its first-ever hearing on the plight of such couples and brought attention to the Uniting American Families Act (UAFB), sponsored in the Senate by Patrick Leahy and in the House by Jerrold Nadler (and subsequently folded into a larger immigration reform bill). Introduced repeatedly in various forms since 2000, the legislation would add the United States to the ranks of sixteen other countries—including Australia, Brazil, Britain, Canada, Israel and South Africa—that draw no distinction between gay and straight binational couples for immigration purposes. In the words of a supportive *Washington Post* editorial, passage of UAFB would "right a gross unfairness."

The restriction on the immigration rights of same-sex noncitizen partners is relatively obscure, but the harm done to those it affects is no less than that caused by the widely debated federal laws and policies that render gay people second-class citizens, like the Defense of Marriage Act and the military's disastrous "don't ask, don't tell" policy. And the scope of the injury is not small. According to the report by Human Rights Watch and Immigration Equality, census data suggest that more than 35,000 binational same-



Protesters opposing the Defense of Marriage Act outside a DNC fundraiser at Fenway Park in Boston, June 23

ELISE AMENDOLA/AP

sex couples live in the United States. No one knows how many others live separated by national borders or have emigrated elsewhere in order to remain together. The existence of such an immigration policy, and the uphill battle to eliminate it, demonstrate just how solidly a formal preference for heterosexuality is built into the legal architecture of the state.

It is not really news that inhabitants of the United States are governed by what historian Margot Canaday calls, in the title of her excellent book, a "straight state." For some time now, scholars of sexuality (following in the footsteps of those who have studied and challenged the race and gender hierarchies embedded in state policies and actions) have professed the analytical goal of what historian Lisa Duggan, writing in 1994, called "queering the state." These scholars have argued that the supposed naturalness of the heterosexual couple, and the unnaturalness of alternatives, is presumed and reinforced in the ordinary workings of government. Canaday's substantial contribution is to trace, in gripping and at times horrifying detail, exactly how the

The Straight State

Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America.

By Margot Canaday.

Princeton. 277 pp. \$29.95.

United States came to operate in this fashion over the course of much of the twentieth century. *The Straight State* provides a compelling history of the designation of "the homosexual as the anticitizen."

Through a sustained focus on three specific and consequential areas of bureaucratic rule—immigration, the military and welfare, each the topic of two chapters in the book—Canaday demonstrates how anticitizenship has been established and enforced as government officials, courts and politicians have struggled to make sense of sexual nonconformity. Although her scholarship emphasizes the first three-quarters of the twentieth century, it could not be more timely in its lessons. Only by accurately mapping the sedimentation of exclusion in policies and decrees laid down by bureaucrats over time, Canaday insists, can we continue, step by necessary step, to dismantle

Steven Epstein is the John C. Shaffer Professor in the Humanities and a sociology professor at Northwestern University. He is the author of *Impure Science: AIDS, Activism, and the Politics of Knowledge (California)* and *Inclusion: The Politics of Difference in Medical Research (Chicago)*.

the formal barriers to full citizenship—a process that, she notes, really began succeeding only in 1990 with the lifting of a uniform federal ban on homosexual immigrants to the United States.

The *Straight State* is a captivating, engagingly written work of social, political, legal and sexual history, and the fruit of an extraordinary attention to archival documents. As a sociologist, I confess with only slight embarrassment that I have on more than a few occasions skimmed over the minutiae of historians' accounts in order to get more quickly to the big-picture analysis and bottom-line conclusions. I felt no such impatience here, in

Much LGBT history is richly local; Canaday focuses on the actions of the federal state.

part because the fine points of the story are endlessly fascinating and sometimes heart-breaking, and in part because Canaday is so skillful (despite this being her first book) at illuminating the big picture with every close-up. The trail cut by *The Straight State* traverses a swath of eras and institutions. One story Canaday tells about the Depression concerns the Federal Transient Program, whose administrators sought to house the men displaced by economic misfortune in encampments but ran up against the widespread perception that such camps were breeding grounds for "unnatural" sex. (An article in this magazine in 1934 commented on the perceived gap between the workings of the camps and the dictates of good citizenship: "It is hard to see how it is possible to prepare people for normal living by adjusting them to the abnormal...life in a congregate camp.") Another story revolves around the GI Bill of 1944, an enormous welfare program that, by 1948, represented 15 percent of the federal budget, with veterans making up half the student body at colleges and universities. Canaday explains that this was "the first federal policy to directly exclude persons identified as homosexual from the benefits of the welfare state."

For Canaday, "the state" is no abstraction. Taking a fine-grained approach, she insists that the state is "what officials do," whether it's worrying about what transient men get up to when the lights go out or deciding which men and women who served

in World War II should be issued the "blue discharges" that made them ineligible for benefits. (There were about 9,000 cases of the latter.) In particular, it seems, what officials did was develop elaborate screening mechanisms to police the boundaries of belonging. Early twentieth-century immigration inspectors were warned to watch for what were described as "striking particularities in dress, talkativeness, witticism, facetiousness...flightiness...unnatural actions, mannerisms, and other eccentricities" that might serve as the telltale signs of sexual perversion to be excluded at the port of entry. (The all-too-common "hidden sexual complexes among Hebrews" merited special vigilance, according to the Marine Hospital Service doctors who lent their expert gaze to the task; they also pointed to the "beardless face [and] the high pitched feminine voice" that were so often found among Italian men.)

Around the same time, examiners of military recruits were instructed to screen out those males who "present the general body conformation of the opposite sex, with sloping narrow shoulders, broad hips, excessive pectoral and pubic adipose deposits, with lack of masculine [hair] and muscular markings." Especially in these early years of state attention, the array of suspect perversions was diverse and diffuse, but the markers of excludability were written on the skin for the trained observer to detect at a glance. As the bureaucracy grew and officials adopted more varied and sophisticated tools for what anthropologist James Scott has called "seeing like a state," officials strove to recognize forms of abnormality unbecoming to citizens that only gradually came into focus as what are now taken to be gay and lesbian practices and identities.

Canaday's argument is that in the United States, the processes of state-building, the exclusion of sexual minorities from the ranks of citizenship and the definition of a modern concept of homosexuality were mutually reinforcing. In the early years of the twentieth century, the federal state was still quite weak and limited, either by today's standards or by comparison with European nations of the time. As the state grew in size and reach and began to oversee the life of the society more fully, it also gained the capacity to police the boundaries of citizenship more systematically. And as the rewards conferred by citi-

zenship became more ample, the presumed necessity for such policing also increased. At the same time, homosexuality was not just any old instance of otherness that state officials felt obliged to penalize. Canaday makes a good case that the encounter with, and management of, homosexuality was surprisingly central to the broader project of state-building and the definition of citizenship throughout this period. By World War II, for example, the purging of lesbians from the military required "a huge expansion of the state's investigatory power," as authorities generated thick files tracing "an expansive web of friends and acquaintances that sometimes extended far beyond a single base or unit."

Modern notions of homosexuality and the modern US bureaucratic state grew up together, Canaday argues. And this coincidence of timing, she suggests intriguingly, may even help explain why the state became, and remains, more officially homophobic than many of its counterparts in Europe, where the bureaucracy was already consolidated before homosexuality emerged as a concern to be reckoned with. "Homophobia" is the term Canaday uses throughout, though its roots in psychology make it less than ideal to describe what officials might do regardless of their personal sentiments or unconscious fears. Queer theorists speak instead of "heteronormativity"; but this term is not quite right either, or at least it would be insufficient for Canaday's purposes, because an emphasis on cultural norms and regulatory ideals fails to capture the grounding of antigay sentiments in the concrete and mundane practices of governance. The sociologist Steven Seidman recently wrote of a midcentury "state-driven nationwide politic aggressively enforcing institutionalized normative heterosexuality"—which is more to the point but a bit of a mouthful.

The larger argument, however, is that a history of the modern American state is simultaneously a genealogy of what we now take to be homosexuality. In the early period covered by the book, immigration and military personnel spoke not about homosexuals but about perverts, mannish women, men who displayed (in a curious turn of phrase) "feminism," "wolves" who preyed on younger men and the "lambs" who were their prey. This mix of bureaucratic, medical and colloquial lingo described a hodgepodge of varieties of gender inversion and nonnormative sexual practices. Over time, though, homosexuality took shape in its modern guise, defined less exclusively by gender roles and more by what psychoana-

lysts called “sexual-object choice”: the sex of the desired partner. At the same time, “the homosexual” stabilized as a type of person defined by a knowable preference or orientation that was manifested in its “tendencies” even when behavior was absent. The story of this shift has been told before, but Canaday’s innovation is to emphasize the role of the state, and not just medical and psychiatric experts, in these redefinitions. As she nicely puts it, “There was at first neither chicken nor egg. (As in: What came first? Homosexuality, or its regulation?) State-building itself was instrumental in helping to produce the category that an expanding state would then see as its function to police.”

Importantly, though, Canaday does not imagine that the state was in a position simply to etch its categories and meanings onto individuals, as if the latter were blank slates. Instead, she describes a complex process of mutual reinforcement and resistance, similar to what the philosopher of science Ian Hacking calls “looping effects,” whereby powerful institutions categorize what they see people doing and present those understandings to the categorized, who may then internalize them, change them or reject them in ways that influence categorization down the line. Canaday describes how many of those caught in the spotlight of state scrutiny ended up reconceiving who they considered themselves to be. This was true of women in the military who had never given much thought to the deeper meanings of the affinities they felt with other women but who, in the wake of hostile interrogations and career-destroying witch hunts, put a name to those inchoate sensibilities. “Knowing about [homosexuality] now,” one female victim of the midcentury military purge commented, “I look back into my childhood and feel that I have been gay all my life.” But it was also true of the men who, over time, became obliged to accept a new understanding of homosexuality that broke with the earlier model of gender inversion, which reserved stigma only for the passive, “feminized” sexual partner. Back in 1917, a certain Private O’Dell, when caught in the act of sex with another man, could protest in honest confusion: “I am doing nothing wrong.... Johnson is my punk.” But as the military increasingly sought to weed out all those with homosexual tendencies, regardless of their roles during sex, it enforced and helped to spread the object-choice model of sexuality, which has become central to the definition of mainstream gay identity and community.

It’s worth underscoring the novelty of Canaday’s approach. Much recent LGBT history, following in the footsteps of historian George Chauncey’s pioneering book *Gay New York*, has been resolutely local. This work has impressively chronicled the texture of gay life in places like Philadelphia, Fire Island, San Francisco and Buffalo, but by and large it has ignored the federal government. Yet as Canaday reminds us, citizenship is first and foremost a national status, and activities at the federal level are consequential for how these lines of inclusion and exclusion are drawn. To the extent that histories of gay life have focused on the state, they have tended to examine one administrative realm alone, such as immigration policy or the military, rather than juxtapose several of them, as Canaday does here. Scholars have been drawn particularly to the military’s policing of sexuality in World War II (a story told well by Allan Bérubé in *Coming Out Under Fire*) and to the antigay hysteria of the McCarthy era afterward. But Canaday makes an excellent case for starting the story much earlier, showing how the midcentury preoccupation with homosexuality presupposed “an expanding state’s steady accretion of tools, knowledge, and experience” that dated all the way back to the early years of the century. Finally, a focus on the state also allows Canaday to go further in linking the politics of sexuality to those of gender and race. On the one hand, she suggests how state administration of sexuality both resembled and differed from its management of gender and racial categories. On the other hand, she is attentive to the intersections, analyzing, for example, how the treatment of queer immigrants by federal authorities varied according to the immigrants’ race or national origin, and considering how the attempts to drum lesbians out of the military accelerated precisely as women began making stronger claims for inclusion in the institution.

Who gets extended the entire complement of citizenship rights? The question is an important and vexing one. The saga of George Fleuti, a Swiss immigrant who successfully sued to prevent his deportation for “moral turpitude” in the early 1960s, is instructive. In a case that rose all the way to the Supreme Court, the Board of Immigration Appeals eventually conceded that Fleuti could stay in the United States because it had not been proven that he was a homosexual at the time of his entry into the country. Fleuti, in fact, had been convicted subsequently—once for being “a lewd and dissolute person” and another time for an

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act of oral copulation—which more typically would have sufficed to ensure deportation. Yet as Canaday observes and as Fleuti's lawyers also maintained, Fleuti “exhibited many of the traits of a good citizen—he was productively employed, a responsible family member...well thought of by his associates, and not least, both northern European and male.” What is noteworthy is that these mitigating factors did not thereby establish Fleuti's credentials as a “good homosexual,” worthy of US residency. Instead, in a policy environment in which “the homosexual” and “the citizen” were antithetical, the state drew the logical conclusion that Fleuti “was not a homosexual at all.”

Fleuti's “victory” was anomalous, and it

paths by definition), still less what sense ordinary gay or lesbian readers of those articles made of them. Canaday keeps her attention trained on the paper trail left by courts, legislators and bureaucrats, rarely venturing too far into the broader world whose contours, she claims, were being reshaped by the state. The result is that the last chapter before the conclusion, on immigration battles from 1952 to 1983, reads more like a recap of a string of court cases than a history of a society that was brimming with changes on many fronts—political, cultural and religious, among others—in ways that surely mattered for how gay people imagined whether, where and how they belonged in society.

A certain narrowing of focus is essential for a tight argument, but conclusions should then be moderated correspondingly. Near the end of the book, Canaday instead goes out on a limb. She claims, “It is precisely

A court held that a gay man who ‘exhibited traits of a good citizen’ was not gay at all.

stands out among Canaday's many stories of lives torn apart by a state insistent on defining citizenship in ways that made queer people into an other. A crucial question to ask, however, is, What impact did all of this policing have on those who were not caught directly in its web? After all, most gay people (or people who engaged in homosexual behaviors) never brushed against it, and many of those who could have been trapped were never even spotted by military, immigration or welfare authorities. As historian Eithne Luibhéid has described, some even figured out how to beat the state at its own game, like the lesbians who learned to “straighten up” when confronting immigration officials by growing out their hair and nails, putting on makeup and accessorizing.

What were the ripple effects of state action? Canaday argues, plausibly enough, that what is “*individually*” devastating can also be “*broadly* powerful”—that policies about immigration, military service and welfare eligibility sent clear messages that permeated the whole society. Yet she misses opportunities to prove the point or analyze this saturation in any detail. She notes, for example, that one of the pivotal, later court battles over gay immigrants—the *Boutilier v. Immigration and Naturalization Service* case of the late 1960s—“was widely reported in the mainstream and homophile press.” But she doesn't tell us what reporters had to say about the case (which affirmed the INS's ability to declare homosexuals to be psycho-

because citizenship is a national category that the federal government (rather than states or localities) has played *the predominant role* in defining homosexual personhood” (my emphasis). Of course, she has no way of proving that this is true. Indeed, the earlier wave of histories that tell the stories of gay life in individual cities suggest that “homosexual personhood” has often been defined locally to a significant degree. Does it not change one's sense of oneself and of one's possibilities to live in a city that has a nondiscrimination ordinance or that has more than one gay bar? Canaday argues quite rightly that “states and localities can certainly make life better for LGBT people, but they cannot bestow equal citizenship upon them. Only the national government can do that.” Yes, and that is why, for example, the federal Defense of Marriage Act weighs heavily on the proponents of marriage equality, no matter how many states legalize same-sex marriage. But establishing the centrality of the federal government to definitions of citizenship is different from proving that federal practices overwhelmingly shape everyday meanings of gayness.

And what about other actors? Perhaps the state appears to have such unobstructed power to define meanings and identities in Canaday's account in part because she consistently juxtaposes this mighty machine with the fortunes of isolated individuals. Her reliance

on court cases reinforces this perception: the world narrows to uneven duels like *United States v. Roberto Flores-Rodriguez* and *Boutilier v. Immigration and Naturalization Service*. Yet the individuals involved in these cases were not always left to fend for themselves. Canaday notes in passing that in 1967 something called the Homosexual Law Reform Society of America filed an amicus brief in *Boutilier*; subsequently she mentions that the Mattachine Society, an important early gay-rights group that was active throughout the 1950s and '60s, was also involved in the *Boutilier* case. It seems that by the later moments of Canaday's historical account, a social movement has emerged—mysteriously, as if out of some crevice that the scorching brightness of the federal searchlight somehow failed to penetrate. And while it's certainly outside the scope of Canaday's analysis to trace the emergence or track the trajectory of this movement, I wish she had paused briefly to reflect on its implications for the question of how identities come into being. Canaday cites the sociologists Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper on the power of states to define identities. But while Brubaker and Cooper importantly observe that states possess “the material and symbolic resources to impose the categories, classificatory schemes, and modes of social counting and accounting with which bureaucrats, judges, teachers, and doctors must work and to which non-state actors must refer,” they are more attentive to context than Canaday. “The state is not the only ‘identifier’ that matters,” they write. For example, “the literature on social movements...is rich in evidence on how movement leaders challenge official identifications and propose alternative ones.”

Of course, gay movements were simply absent from much of the era that Canaday surveys, certainly for the first half of the twentieth century. But for the more recent period, the state's definition of the homosexual as the anticitizen should be studied alongside the organized opponents of such injustice and not just in terms of its victims. Among other things, doing so would sharpen our understanding of all the present-day struggles for sexual citizenship in which LGBT and queer movements are central players, as well as the right-wing counter-movements that have arisen to derail them. Although Canaday misses some aspects of this larger story, a great virtue of her thoughtful, accomplished and beautifully written book is that it lays the necessary foundation for just such an understanding. ■

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Lucie Dillon and her son Humbert among the Indians on her farm near Albany, New York, as imagined by an unknown artist

Stolen Youth

by RUTH SCURR

When she turned 50 in 1820, Lucie Dillon, marquise de la Tour du Pin, began to write her memoirs. She intended them for her two surviving children (four were deceased), but in 1822 Lucie's daughter Charlotte suddenly died, leaving only Aymar, her last-born son, as recipient of the record of his mother's extraordinary life. The unfinished text, which breaks off at Napoleon's return from Elba in 1815, was not published until 1907; it has rarely been out of print since. Historians of the French Revolution have long pillaged Lucie's *Journal d'une femme de cinquante ans* for colorful anecdotes and eyewitness observations to adorn their narratives and bring them to life. In

Ruth Scurr teaches history and politics at Cambridge University. She is the author of Fatal Purity: Robespierre and the French Revolution.

Dancing to the Precipice

The Life of Lucie de la Tour du Pin, Eyewitness to an Era.

By Caroline Moorehead.
Harper. 480 pp. \$27.99.

her new biography, *Dancing to the Precipice*, Caroline Moorehead returns Lucie to the center of her own story.

Lucie was born in Paris at a fashionable address on the rue du Bac, Faubourg Saint-Germain, in 1770. Her parents were second cousins who married in their teens; both were descended from the Irish Dillons of Roscommon. The family's ancestors had been in Paris since the Seventh Viscount Dillon raised an Irish regiment and followed James II's Jacobite court into exile. Lucie's father, like his forebears, was a soldier, so Lucie saw little of him during her childhood. Her mother, as "beautiful and

sweet-tempered as an angel," lived under the dominion of her own unpleasant and exacting mother; caught between the constant warring of these women, Lucie later remembered that she "had no real childhood" but became a reserved, discreet, taciturn judge of the hatred between her mother and grandmother.

Whatever the internal psychological truth, Lucie certainly had the external trappings of a glamorous and privileged childhood. When Lucie was 7, her mother was made a lady-in-waiting to Marie Antoinette. That same year, the duc de Lauzun gave Lucie a doll with a full court wardrobe—including a well-made wig and silk stockings—ordered from Rose Bertin, the queen's dressmaker. She heard her mother sing with Niccolò Piccinni and had a wealth of opportunities to develop her own musical talent; she was educated by an excellent private tutor, M. Combes, who became a close friend; she was healthy and attractive, and even smallpox left her unscarred.

Grief came early to Lucie's life, well before the revolution that would claim the lives of many of her friends and relatives. When Lucie was 12, her mother died from an undiagnosed stomach complaint; faced with her grandmother's hysterical tears, after all the years of familial unpleasantness there had been, Lucie remained dry-eyed and silent. This was the first serious test of her steely self-possession in circumstances of shattering loss. Her father did not come back to Paris to be at his wife's deathbed, and when he did return, several years later, he brought news of his engagement to a rich Creole with two small children of her own. Lucie met her stepmother only once, before her father departed for the West Indies with his new wife, a new baby known as Fanny and—most devastating of all for Lucie—with her trusted tutor, M. Combes. Before leaving, Lucie's father picked out a potential husband for his teenage daughter, Frédéric de Gouvernet, a young aide-de-camp, well liked by his fellow officers, who had served with Lafayette in America. But Lucie's grandmother vetoed the proposal. This did not discourage Lucie, who had formed a romantic attachment to Frédéric simply from talking to her father about him. When she was 16, in 1786, the engagement went ahead with Marie Antoinette's blessing. Like her mother before her, Lucie was helped by the queen to sidestep opposition in her immediate family. In an age when marital love and fidelity were frowned upon as unsophisticated, Lucie had conceived a passionate love for her betrothed: "It was an

instinct...a guidance from above.... I felt that I belonged to him, that my whole life was his."

Lucie miscarried her first baby at Versailles when she tripped while running to the queen's apartments, trying not to be late. Her second was stillborn, strangled by its umbilical cord. Moorehead is right to remind us that "few 18th-century women managed to keep all of their babies," but this is no reason to assume that Lucie was unmarked by those poignant losses. They certainly made her more sympathetic with Marie Antoinette, who had lost a young daughter in 1787. In 1789, at the opening of the Estates General (France's largest representative body, meeting for the first time since 1614 to try to avert national bankruptcy), Lucie could tell from the way the queen used her fan that she was very agitated and sick with worry about the 7-year-old dauphin, who was dying of tuberculosis as France reached the brink of revolution.

You cannot do justice to the French Revolution from the vantage point of Versailles. What you can capture from there is the surprise, misunderstanding and mounting fear of the court as events spiraled out of control. Lucie's memoirs are unmatched in this regard. Her comments on the speeches to the Estates General are not intellectually distinguished but have the ring of truth:

The speech of M. Necker, Minister of Finance, seemed to me unbearably dull. It lasted more than two hours and, to my nineteen-year-old ears, seemed never-ending. The ladies were seated on fairly wide benches which rose in tiers and had nothing to lean against except the knees of the person behind.... I think I have never felt so weary as during that speech, though M. Necker's supporters praised it to the skies.

On the day of the storming of the Bastille in Paris, Lucie set out from Versailles to visit nearby Berny, "unaware that there had been the slightest disturbance." When she was told that the people of Paris had risen, captured the Bastille and barricaded the city, she remembered that her astonishment was even greater than her anxiety. Her father-in-law was appointed minister for war soon afterward, and Lucie and Frédéric moved into a fine apartment in the ministry, from which they entertained the delegates to the recently renamed National

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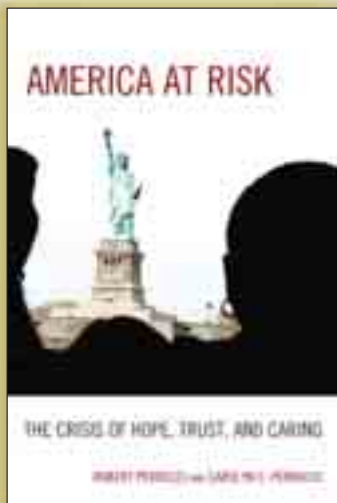
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Assembly, responsible for designing a new constitution for France. Among those delegates seated around Lucie's table were future revolutionary leaders: "So long as we were at Versailles, the men always wore formal dress at these dinners and I remember M. de Robespierre in an apple-green coat, with his thick white hair wonderfully dressed." Lucie's description of October 5, when three or four hundred women advanced on Versailles from Paris demanding bread, includes skillfully economical remarks about the king and queen. Louis XVI, she remembered, "consulted everyone" as to the best course of action, and Marie Antoinette, though equally uncertain of what to do, "could not bring herself to undertake a flight by night." These modest but precise observations have had a decisive influence on the character sketches of the French Revolution's protagonists, which are passed like heirlooms from one generation of historians to the next: Louis XVI was indecisive, his queen too fastidious for her own good. But Lucie's observations are not limited to the rich and famous; her details about the unnamed and unremembered actors are just as telling:

The women who had invaded the Ministry ate everything it was possible to find for them, and then went to sleep on the floor of the kitchens. Many of them wept, saying that they had been forced to march and that they did not know why they were there.

Moorehead encounters a problem familiar to all biographers: how to set a life in its historical context without dissipating the story's central focus? This question is especially pressing in relation to the French Revolution because there is so much to explain. A full account of the transformation of the Estates General into the National Assembly, the fall of the Bastille and the women's march to Versailles on October 5 would require a very different kind of book: one in which the part of Lucie de la Tour du Pin would be a mere footnote. Moorehead's solution is conventional. She interweaves potted summaries of the major political events against which her subject lived her life with longer passages devoted to Lucie's friendships and preoccupations. For the years 1789 to 1794, when Lucie and her family escape from the Terror in Bordeaux, the transition between these two narrative styles is rapid and rather awkward. There are clumsy gestures toward filling in the background: "In the countryside, a

sense of panic was catching fire"; "Paris was much altered"; "France's revolution was heading into a new phase." These abstractions or generalizations are not really authorial failings; rather, they are frank indications of how hard it is to tell the story of the revolution. Moorehead is sometimes noticeably frustrated by Lucie's limited political engagement (her task might have been easier if Lucie, like her acquaintance Madame de Staël, had been more politically interested):

More surprising, perhaps, was how unreflective Lucie appeared to be of the revolution gathering pace around her. Even as the army was losing all its officers, as the Assembly was turning steadily more hostile towards the aristocracy and senior prelates, as friends and relations were frantically packing to leave France—all things she witnessed every day and heard about at length...Lucie continued to pay visits and to enjoy herself.

But Moorehead also makes excuses for her subject: she was young, she had just given birth again, she was pleased to be out of her grandmother's control and she was in love with her husband. The attempt to exonerate one's subject is another standard move on the part of a biographer, one that typically detracts from narrative power. In fact, Lucie needs no excuses made for her; she made her own. In her memoirs, Lucie's unwavering lucidity elicits as much respect for what she knew she could not explain as for the facts about the revolution of which she was certain because she had lived them:

Looking back, now, after many years, and calling to mind the depth of the mistrust, absurdity, unreasonableness and fear which held even intelligent minds in thrall during this period—so aptly known as the Terror—the whole situation seems inconceivable. The simplest of reasonings, even that of a ten-year-old child, should have been sufficient to banish this confusion and fear. No one asked, for example, how it was that people were dying of hunger in Bordeaux, when just across the river the necessities of life abounded. No one could explain why, but the fact remains that no peasant from Blaye or Royan would have dared to bring two bags of flour to the great city. He would immediately have been denounced for hoarding. These facts have not been explained in any

memoirs of the period. I leave the task to historians and return to my own story.

In 1794 Lucie, Frédéric and their two young children escaped to America on the cargo ship *Diana*. Early in the journey a French man-of-war drew up alongside and demanded their ship return to France, where the passengers would surely have faced the guillotine. Then a thick fog came down and saved them. During the sixty days at sea that it took to reach Boston, Lucie found her long hair unmanageable and hacked it off with kitchen scissors, tossing it into the ocean along with "all the frivolous ideas which my pretty fair curls had encouraged." She was only 24. The revolution had stolen her youth, and in the United States she began again: a sober, healthy, responsible life, running a farm in Albany. The Bostonians she met believed Lucie's hair had been shorn in preparation for the guillotine. They went out of their way to help her. Moorehead recounts, "By 1794, some 20,000 French men and women had reached America and were eking out precarious livings as dancing masters, chefs, teachers of French and music or on small farms." Once it has escaped from the strain of explaining frenetic revolutionary events, Moorehead's narrative settles down to a more comfortable pace, in keeping with the calm and healing that Lucie found in America.

The news that reached them from France was extremely distressing. Lucie's father went to the guillotine shouting, "*Vive le roi!*" before the blade fell. Frédéric's father followed him. Lucie's grief did not destroy her responses to the majestic natural beauty she was now surrounded by, but her life, undoubtedly, became more austere and eventually more spiritual. She rose at dawn and worked all day. She purchased a slave husband and wife who had been cruelly separated, and allowed them to live together in a room of their own on her farm. The purchase of another human being troubled Lucie, and she would "always remember the smallest circumstance connected with it." She could not afford to run a farm without slave labor, so she settled her conscience by making the happiness of her slaves a priority. Before returning to France in 1796, to reclaim property that could be secured only in person, Lucie and Frédéric freed their slaves: "The poignancy of such a scene cannot be described," she wrote. "Never have I known a happier moment." Moorehead presents a convincing

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portrait of Lucie's hard-won happiness in the United States and simultaneously shows the insidious pull of the Old World. People from the past—Talleyrand, for example—show up almost like revenants at the Albany farm. The news that Robespierre is dead resounds from the porches of New England. Much as she is fascinated by the Shakers, Iroquois and others she encounters going about the business of trade in her new rural life, it becomes sadly inevitable that Lucie and Frédéric will go back to their own traumatized country to witness the rise of Napoleon. "I felt no pleasure," Lucie wrote, "returning to France."

In addition to Lucie's memoir, Moorehead has drawn extensively on private correspondence (especially letters between Lucie and her goddaughter Félicie de Duras) and unpublished manuscripts. These additional sources corroborate rather than dispel the sense of profound reserve that is present in Lucie's own record of her life. Moorehead rightly emphasizes this aspect of her subject's personality: "the gaps in her narrative at moments of tragedy...were telling. It was as if she retired into herself, and simply concentrated on surviving; and, after a period, she picked up the thread again." Telling too are moments of impatience with less self-controlled friends. To one, hopelessly and self-destructively in love with the writer Chateaubriand, she wrote: "To look inside your heart, see what needs destroying and then not have the strength to do it: that is more dangerous than useful; one grows accustomed to one's enemy, and by making it familiar one loses the desire to get rid of it.... I want to persuade you that there are a number of things in life that one must pass by without looking at."

These are the words of someone deep and emotionally sophisticated, rigorously committed, as Moorehead suggests, to a certain set of "manners of the heart." More than this, though, they are the words of a woman who taught herself to survive near-unimaginable grief. By the end of her life in 1853, Lucie had seen three revolutions tear her country and family to pieces. She had lost five of her six surviving children and outlived the husband who was the only love of her life. If there were things in that long brave life Lucie chose not to look at, we can be sure they won't see the light of day now. As the biographer of this formidable woman, Moorehead has conducted herself in a seemly and sensitive fashion. She does not have the upper hand over her subject, and what emerges from *Dancing to the Precipice* is that no one ever did. ■

Cures for the Common Cold War

by BENJAMIN PALOFF

Jaroslav Anders's *Between Fire and Sleep*, a collection of essays that first appeared in American periodicals, especially *The New Republic*, when Eastern Europe was digging out from under the wreckage of Communism, is the best book of its kind available in English and, quite likely, any other language. Granted, the field of nonscholarly books that synopsizes modern Polish literature is admittedly narrow, so such praise may sound slight, a little like Spinal Tap exclaiming that they're huge in Japan.

Yet Anders is not without serious competition from fellow Polish writers. The most imposing is the latter portion of *The History of Polish Literature* (1969) by Czesław Miłosz, with its contentious opinions, occasional errors and imperious language. Miłosz describes Wisława Szymborska—who would receive the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1996, sixteen years after Miłosz was awarded it—as a poet who "often leans toward preciousness" and who "is probably at her best where her woman's sensibility outweighs her existential brand of rationalism." Though the Polish language has no definite or indefinite articles, summary judgments like these leave no doubt that Miłosz understood what it meant to crown his *History* with *The* instead of *A*. Stanisław Barańczak's *Breathing Under Water and Other East European Essays* (1990), written during the poet's first years of exile in the United States, is suffused with the bewilderment of an Eastern European intellectual trying to make sense of the West, a struggle that is as much Barańczak's subject as is twentieth-century Polish culture. Last, there are the essays of theater critic Jan Kott, collected in such volumes as *The Theater of Essence* (1984) and *The Memory of the Body* (1992), whose interest in what literature says about our lives, whoever we may be, allows him to dispense with the usual arguments for Poland's relevance.

For generations a staple of Polish addresses to the West (and Western reviews of the same), such arguments have become hopelessly irrelevant, vestiges of what the novelist Witold Gombrowicz described as Poland's inferiority complex. What lends

Between Fire and Sleep

Essays on Modern Polish Poetry and Prose.

By Jaroslav Anders.

Yale. 224 pp. \$35.

the aforementioned titles their continued vitality, despite their having been shaped by political circumstances that younger readers cannot remember, is their abiding interest in questions that transcend the headlines and gesture toward aesthetic, metaphysical and ethical quandaries. The nine authors discussed in *Between Fire and Sleep* thrive on these questions, and most of them received comparable attention from Anders's predecessors. (Miłosz's third-person passages about himself make for a bizarre instance of critical auto-commentary.) In addition to Miłosz, Szymborska and Gombrowicz, Anders discusses Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, author of demonic plays and novels; Bruno Schulz, a lyrical nostalgic; Tadeusz Konwicki, a wicked postwar satirist; Gustaw Herling-Grudziński, whose prose blurs the boundary between fiction and reportage; Zbigniew Herbert, a poet who unfavorably compared the contemporary world with its classical roots; and Adam Zagajewski, whose meditative lyrics are at least as influential in the United States as they are in Poland. At one time, most of these names would have been familiar to high-minded readers looking for "Writers From the Other Europe"—the portentous title of a series edited by Philip Roth for Penguin Books, which first gave an English home to Schulz, Gombrowicz and Konwicki. Today it is doubtful that any reader, Polish or not, would agree that these nine authors encapsulate the whole story of Polish literature in the twentieth century.

But that is beside the point. If Anders's essays do not aspire to a complete play-by-play of Polish literature's last century, they at least offer the most focused and entertaining highlights reel I've seen. And because the essays were prompted by the appearance of new English translations, they trace the arc of American tastes for Polish literature during and immediately after the cold war and make a strong case for re-evaluating these authors on less ephemeral merits—on the basis of their stylistic and philosophical sophistication. One of the more refreshing qualities of *Between Fire and Sleep*, in fact, is Anders's astute diagno-

*Benjamin Paloff, a poetry editor at Boston Review, teaches at the University of Michigan. His most recent translation is Marek Biernczyk's *Tworci* (Northwestern).*

sis of the narrow-mindedness of the American (and, for that matter, Polish) vision of Polish literature as an affirmation of our most convenient, flattering verdicts on history. "Poetry as a 'witness of history,'" Anders writes, "was a constant motif of Milosz's essays as well as of many of his poems. In many cases, this view of literature as mentor and consoler was certainly true. But in time it inevitably led to a one-sided, reductive reading of some of Poland's most complex writers."

Anders has no illusions about his occasional indulgence in such reductions. He notes that the essays, when read together, "may look like a sort of farewell—a long Polish good-bye to a certain way of reading, of living with literature, that was predominant in the Eastern Europe of my youth and that is no more largely owing to the bloodless revolution of 1989." The Romantic lusting after a life in literature—or, more accurately, a life *as* literature—is a longstanding trait of Polish behavior, one that has been the target of more than a few satirical barbs, with those of Gombrowicz and Konwicki (who literally defined *The Polish Complex* in his 1977 novel) among the most caustic. As Anders points out, however, in an intellectual climate that thrives on mining the written word for unambiguous cries of protest, even someone as aggressively anti-Romantic as Gombrowicz can be deemed a prophet: "A writer who sneered at the role of a 'committed' intellectual as 'too pretentious and too frivolous' became, paradoxically, one of the mentors of the dissenting intellectuals of the sixties and seventies."

Back then, young Polish intellectuals and their English-language readers could accept at face value the notion that the former were fundamentally different from the latter, that anyone who struggled to live a free life behind the Iron Curtain naturally read, wrote and breathed more deeply than could be imagined here, in our paradise of Chevrolet, Coca-Cola and James Bond. As Anders puts it, referring to the Polish side of the equation, he and other writers "canvassed the printed page for philosophy, theology, history, moral inspiration, preferably presented in the classical rhetorical mode in which form serves content, in which structure follows meaning, and in which beauty is an aspect of knowledge. Perhaps literature for us was the Great Substitute for myriads of intellectual adventures available to people in free societies?" Of course it was, though the same could be said by

precocious teenagers and underappreciated small-town twentysomethings the world over. As for the American side of the equation, when the nightly news constantly confirms our sense that we have it so good we can't possibly know how good we have it, as it did during the cold war, it becomes difficult, if not altogether impossible, for readers not to extol these authors as beacons of Freedom and Truth, Poland's answer to the Voice of America—for which Anders, as it happens, has worked during the past twenty-five years.

Poland, its capital once the namesake of the Warsaw Pact, is now a member of both NATO and the European Union, and while its literature is hardly a historical relic, our approach to it often risks being just that. In this regard, Anders's critical approach is an invaluable tonic. His fleet-footed leaps between biographical detail and scholarly commentary are enormously edifying and entertaining in their own right. At the same time, Anders generally refuses to succumb to the romanticizing that has reduced so much journalism about these authors to a pocket lexicon of moral clichés. Take the book's opening essay on Bruno Schulz. Born in Drohobycz in 1892, Schulz is presented here not only as the brilliant author and artist, the dark metaphysician or the Jew murdered by a Nazi in 1942 while fetching a loaf of bread but also as an idiosyncratic, not altogether pleasant character, "a self-centered personality preoccupied almost exclusively with his own spiritual ventures, his writing, and the practical problems of his life." In the Schulz essay, as in the essays on Gombrowicz and Witkiewicz that follow it, hardly any of Anders's interpretations are novel. Yet the portraits are invigorated by Anders's sense, so often lacking in scholarly efforts, that these writers were people—conflicted, real, intriguing human beings—as well as writers, and that their humanity continues to color their work long after the historical circumstances that shaped their lives have passed.

Anders's affinities as a reader are strongest in his essays on Milosz and Herbert, the most insightful of the pieces collected here. Both poets cast so long a shadow over contemporary letters as to make them magnets of hyperbolic praise and derision; in the few years since Milosz and Herbert died, in 2004 and 1998, respectively, critics young and old, Polish or not, have painted them as the angel or the devil, whispering muse-like into living poets' ears. The Russian-American poet Joseph Brodsky called Milosz "one of the greatest poets of our time,"

whereas in the title poem of his most recent book Krzysztof Jaworski, an outstanding voice in contemporary Polish poetry, laments "how far Brodsky's set us back.... And Czesław." Anders tempers these tendencies toward devotion or vilification with gentle but firm skepticism, expressing his heartfelt admiration for these writers as he deflates the moral authority so often ascribed to them. In his discussion of Milosz's *Road-Side Dog*, a late collection of prose fragments, Anders faults the poet for the epic sweep of his vision, which occasionally surfaces in grand claims about history and gross generalizations about cultural crisis. Unlike Milosz, Anders contends that the modern world is not in crisis, insofar as very little has changed in the fundamental underpinnings

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 but will have to do
 what painting did
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 there is a man at the door who says
 I've made small changes
 he found your notebook
 throughout in red. The recurring dream
 contrived in places
 Of waning significance
 it resembles the hand
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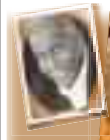


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of moral behavior: "If popular culture is any indication, we still prefer to see virtue rewarded and vice punished. Most members of modern societies, instead of wallowing in aristocratic decadence, work sixty hours a week, worry about their children's future, and live by the same unreflective, cautious, pragmatic moral code that has been typical of the toiling classes in all eras. The invention of the crisis of modernity—the radical division between then and now—appears to be yet another modern fallacy that confuses the history of ideas with history as such."

Free of this confusion, Anders succeeds in drawing attention to the paradoxes and failures of writers who become, in his treatment, more human than heroic, and who test and refine their literary talents on the wheel of paradox. This is especially true of his discussion of Herbert, whose poems were sometimes sung at meetings of Poland's anti-Communist underground and who is still often described as someone whose moral compass pointed rather than spun. In Anders's far more sensitive interpretation, Herbert remains fascinating not because he shows us the path toward righteousness but because he demonstrates that our fall toward evil, whether private or political, is a natural consequence of our striving toward good: "Tension within culture endlessly fleeing and constantly returning to its paradoxical source is probably the most intriguing subject of Herbert's poetry—far more important than his political parables and allusions. It also reveals Herbert as a poet whose vision of humankind in the universe is irredeemably dark, although it does not preclude individual dignity and existential heroism." By co-translating *Barbarian in the Garden* (1985), Herbert's first collection of brilliant and horrifying essays to appear in English, and now criminally out of print, Anders prepared himself for a more nuanced consideration of contemporary Polish literature. It is refreshing to see him revive it now that the fog of war, or at least of the cold war, has lifted.

In this way, Anders also deflates the exceptionalism that is common to American and Polish national discourses and remains, at least in part, a source of Polish writers' stunning success in this country. Like the heroes of *The Blues Brothers*, John Landis's unlikely cinematic paean to all things Chicago (and therefore both Polish and American), both nations have long held that they are on a mission from God, a mission whose ill-defined goal—Konwicki refers to it as the "religion of freedom," a

concept so terrifyingly fragile it might not survive outside scare quotes—must be attained at all costs. "Like most religions," Anders remarks, "the Polish 'religion of freedom' proved to be a source of astonishing moral power in times of crisis, yet it also created its own orthodoxy." Even for those who have read few or none of the works Anders discusses, his witty reflections should prove enlightening. For the "certain way of reading" to which these essays bid farewell may have had its time and place, but it ultimately proved too orthodox, too programmatic in its vision of good and evil, to survive in a postglobalization, postmodern and—no use avoiding it—post-Communist world.

Between Fire and Sleep does have one flaw, though it is not to be found in Anders's critical acumen or in his wit. Only one essay is devoted to a woman—almost of necessity, since she also received the Nobel Prize. With her often dizzying irony and provocative sense of formal and intellectual play, Wislawa Szymborska could have aided Anders in his dismantling of political and critical orthodoxies, and yet his essay about her is the shortest, most superficial and least inspired in the collection. It is not entirely Anders's fault. Polish literature in English is a men's club, one that reduces such outstanding literary artists as Zofia Nalkowska and Debora Vogel to footnotes in the sexual biography of Bruno Schulz. Unfortunately, and partly because of the image of Polish literature that Anders challenges, women have not been translated into English as readily as their male colleagues. When they have been, they have generally garnered polite smiles more than serious consideration.

But this too is changing. In his preface, Anders points to the recent prose of Magdalena Tulli and Dorota Masłowska, among others, already available in English. In their considerations of these bold new writers, critics have rarely felt the need to point out, as Anders says of Adam Zagajewski, that something in their work "has not been properly resolved." For while a literature of clear resolve may provide reassurance in uncertain times, it is the literature of irresolution, always shuttling between one thing and another, that continues to speak to us through the ages. This may be why Anders's book, too, seems unresolved: because there are so many other writers, troubled and troubling, mysterious and beyond category, who have been trying to speak to us Americans all this time, and who are still waiting to be heard. ■

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ORGANIZATIONS

SAN FRANCISCO Nation discussion group. For information, e-mail evilhess@gmail.com.

NASHVILLE, TENN., Nation discussion group. Contact Howard Romaine. hromaine@gmail.com.

NEW HAVEN, CONN., Nation discussion group is looking for new members. Call Tom George at (203) 795-5472 for more information.

BERKELEY, CALIF., Nation discussion group. E-mail prehend@gmail.com.

ASHEVILLE, NC, Nation discussion group forming. Contact mgbiney@unca.edu.

BRENTWOOD, CALIF. New Nation discussion group forming. We'd like to start meetings soon. Contact ibhernandez2003@yahoo.com.

THE SPOKANE/INLAND NORTHWEST Nation discussion group. PO Box 293, Cheney, WA 99004; locus29@aol.com.

SANTA CLARA COUNTY, CALIF., Nation discussion group meetings are starting up. Please e-mail loisaaalby@yahoo.com.

LOS ANGELES, BRENTWOOD AREA. Nation discussion group forming. E-mail: bernlendis@verizon.net.

POSITIONS AVAILABLE

CIRCULATION FULFILLMENT MANAGER: *The Nation* magazine, a prestigious subscription-driven weekly, seeks self-directed manager to handle all facets of fulfillment including: print orders; billing & renewal management; master scheduling; management reports (Excel/SmartLink or equivalent); liaison with fulfillment services, printer, newsstand distributor, subscription agents, USPS. Must be detail-oriented, accurate and have good communication skills. Hands-on experience working with PCD or similar service bureau is required. Knowledge of digital and print subscription marketing and fulfillment, including Internet and e-mail subscription marketing, is critical. We offer excellent benefits, a pleasant work environment and a competitive salary. *The Nation* is an equal opportunity employer. Send cover letter, résumé and salary requirement to circmgrjob@thenation.com. No calls or recruiters, please.

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Events

NATIONAL

The Economics of Peace Conference

■ Sonoma, California, October 18-23. "Transforming Money, Rebuilding Community, Redefining Wealth." Vision and praxis for transforming our economic environment. Invited speakers: James Galbraith, Vandana Shiva, Dennis Kucinich, Lynn Woolsey, David Korten, Riane Eisler, Mikel Lezamiz (Mondragon Cooperatives, Spain), Judy Wicks and more. For information, call (707) 939-2973 or visit praxispeace.org.

The Change We Knead Now— Bake Bread for World Peace

■ Bake bread outside the White House to support this petition: (1) implement single-payer healthcare for all; (2) free Leonard Peltier; (3) provide solar-energy collectors for every house; (4) build passenger trains connecting every city; (5) begin organic gardening classes in every school; (6) call for a global cease-fire. thechangewekneadnow.net. (575) 770-3377.

The advertising deadline for Events is every Thursday. Rates: \$210 for 50 words; \$260 for 75 words, additional words (above 75) \$2.00 each. To place an ad, call Amanda at (212) 209-5414.

Puzzle No. 3180

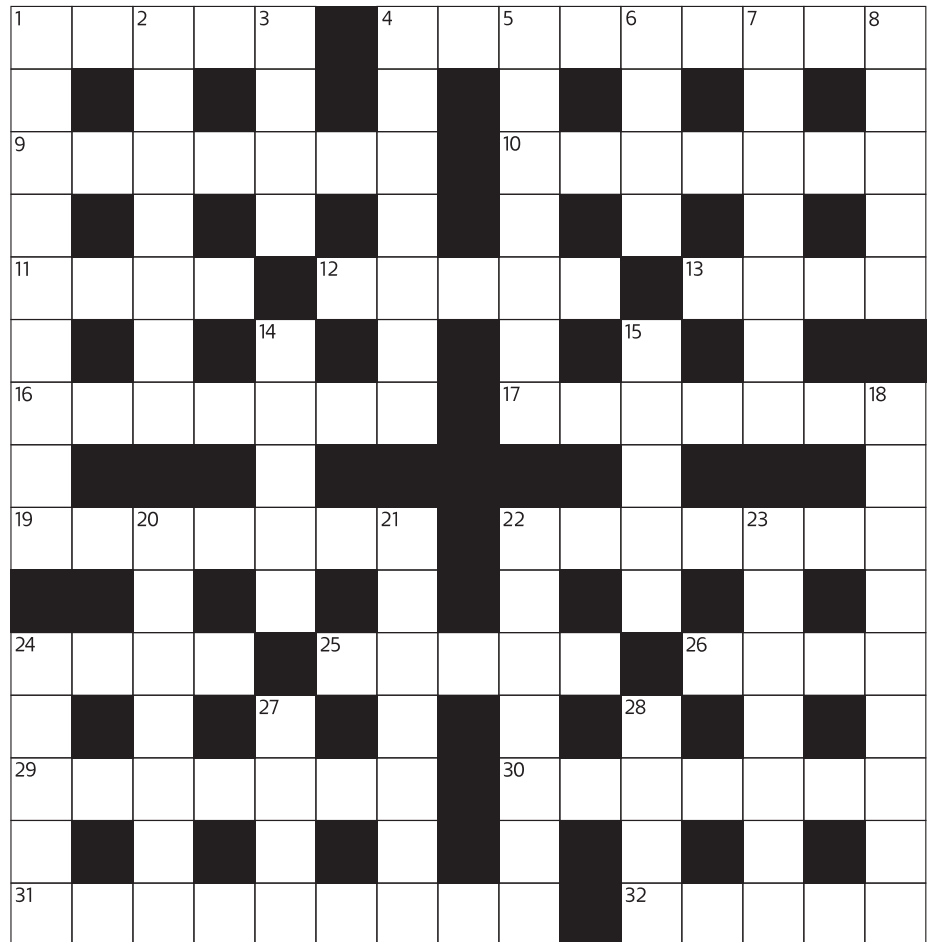
FRANK W. LEWIS

ACROSS

- 1 and 4 It may keep you from getting involved with something personal. (5,9)
 9 In Castro, you'll find one who often says, "I don't believe it!" (7)
 10 A hassle in the plant? (7)
 11 A cad cant! (4)
 12 What's the point to sherry, for example, for a bunch of porkers! (5)
 13 and 26 Does one of the teams sort of sway with it, looking at it from one direction? (4-4)
 16 This and son, and a mountain in Alaska, good for sand, which is bad! (7)
 17 To us it might be a bridge, but to the Brit it's a wrench. (7)
 19 It may be what you give the baby, with a sort of loaf around a mixed drink. (7)
 22 Really mad, as they say—but you can't put a foot down when doing it. (7)
 24 and 25 Slews with this—but you possibly don't eat them. (4-5)
 26 See 13
 29 A direction to what belongs to you and me—or his, sort of? It's a way to keep you going! (7)
 30 Rebuilt a drum, i.e.—and often made a pretty picture. (7)
 31 Sure! A sort of dry tea will make it! But not today! (9)
 32 The Captain of the Pinafore never did, as you might testify! (5)

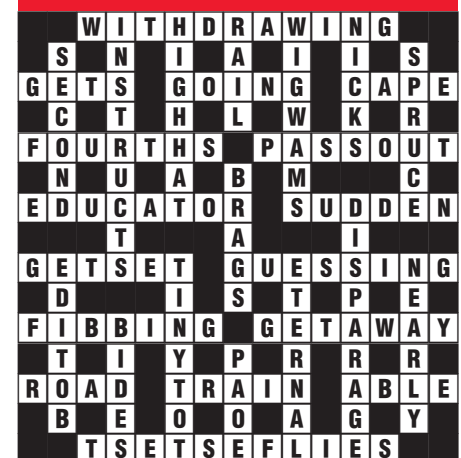
DOWN

- 1 and 24 The dreams you have of soaring high? (7,2,5)
 2 This, men, on a dead man's chest makes a five-spot surround three in the yard, sort of. (7)
 3 Try not to be seen with bare skin showing! (4)
 4 Everything? Nothing! Hitched, as will be permitted. (7)
 5 A gofer goes on them—and makes a mistake about it. (7)
 6 How you might name things around a splash of painting. (4)
 7 Little Virginia is enveloped in rising noise—but it's a way of ducking! (7)
 8 Possibly a belt at the place where you eat. (5)
 14 A little extra, which is good in Paris to you and me. (5)
 15 Grips a bit, owing to a bad scrap. (5)
 18 A rare sort around the main point, right! But one is keeping records. (9)
 20 Saves legal things, and sticks on a table that sounds like water. (7)
 21 Where you are sleeping around what's left of the fire? No wonder you're embarrassed! (7)
 22 Oh, lady, I might be all mixed-up, but this is not the time to work! (7)
 23 I lead those wise men in one direction, as you can guess. (7)
 24 See 1



- 27 Gain a point with rosé, for example. (4)
 28 They say you beat them in an argument! (4)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3179



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THE Nation Salons



Hosted
by

Katrina vanden Heuvel Victor Navasky

What Will Become of the News?

Wednesday, September 23, 7:00PM

A conversation on the future of news, featuring:



Dan Rather, former anchor for CBS Evening News; managing editor and anchor of *Dan Rather Reports*



Jane Mayer, staff writer for *The New Yorker*, is one of America's most renowned investigative reporters and the author of the bestselling book *The Dark Side*.



Marcy Wheeler, a pioneering blogger and Hillman Award winner, writes for Firedoglake.com and is the author of *Anatomy of Deceit*.

moderated by Victor Navasky

What Will Become of Our Culture?

Wednesday, November 18, 7:00PM

A conversation on the future of culture, featuring:



Toni Morrison, a Nobel Prize winning author, is one of American literature's most productive and powerful voices.



Tony Kushner, a Pulitzer Prize winning playwright, is one of the country's most celebrated dramatists.



Walter Mosley, one of America's most versatile and admired writers, is the author of more than 29 critically acclaimed books.

moderated by Gene Seymour

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